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MAF-Gathering

MALAY ACTION FRONT DEFENDS GATHERING

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 10 (Bernama) -- The Malay Action Front (MAF) will not apologise to any group with regard to its gathering themed "Malays Will Not Perish From The Face Of This Earth" on Sunday, which was criticised by various quarters including Umno leaders.

MAF Secretariat chief coordinator Datuk Ibrahim Ali said the organisation accepted all the views and comments made regarding the gathering at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) with an open mind.

"The purpose of the gathering was to raise awareness on the position of the Malays which is still weak and threatened, and the need for Malays to unite, and to rise to defend the Malay dominance and rights," he said at a media conference, here today.

The gathering was reported to have deviated from its original objective when some Umno members and veteran party leaders who spoke had openly criticised the party leadership and government policies.

In defending the speeches, Ibrahim said the demands and criticisms were made out of sincerity.

He said the MAF had also sent a letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi requesting for a meeting with the two leaders.

Ibrahim refuted the perception that the gathering had divided Umno, saying that on the contrary, it had enhanced the Malay spirit and awareness on the welfare and rights of the Malays.

"It depends on their own views, but it was clear that the gathering was not an academic seminar, convention, discussion or forum. It was a rally aimed at raising awareness of the Malays on their welfare and rights. The speeches made were aimed at stressing the points and of course they appeared as critical opinions," he said.

He said the gathering also succeeded in forming a Task Force, chaired by former deputy prime minister Tun Ghafar Baba, which would present a memorandum to the government on "Malay Interests", which was expected to be ready in June.

On Abdullah's view that they should have presented their problems through the right channels, Ibrahim said it was not denied that all this while the criticisms were made through the existing channels such as the Parliament, Umno Supreme Council and the Umno negeal assembly.

"But the gathering was an exposure of the spirit of those who attended and proved that Umno members are not 'yes men' as had been labelled by PAS and Keadilan," he said.

Ibrahim also refuted the claims that organisers of the gathering were frustrated Umno leaders who had been marginalised from the mainstream because most of the Umno members involved were still holding positions in the party.

On the call that disciplinary action be taken against Umno members involved, Ibrahim said the matter was up to the Supreme Council and the party leadership to decide.

Ibrahim also urged Umno leaders especially the three vice-presidents and the Umno Youth Exco members to go down to the people and explain on the current issues raised by the people and to defend the party and government.

"The people are now smart. They want clarification and not everyone understands when the government takes any action. For example, the government's reacquisition of MAS (Malaysia Airlines), give an

explanation," he added.
-- BERNAMA
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