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Mahathir-Chinese

ONLY SABAH CHINESE FROM DEFUNCT AKAR CAN JOIN UMNO, PM CLARIFIES

KUALA LUMPUR, May 21 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad clarified that only Sabah Chinese who were members of the now-defunct Sabah's Parti Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar) can join Umno.

"I apologise for my statement yesterday that Umno is open to all Chinese in Sabah. This is not true," he said at a press conference after chairing an Umno Supreme Council meeting here today.

There were Chinese Akar members who are locally known as "Sinos" and categorised as Bumiputera through mixed marriages, he said.

"We are willing to accept all of them even though they are pure Chinese and not Sinos," he said.

Upon formally disbanding Akar in Kota Kinabalu yesterday, Dr Mahathir announced that Umno was open to all Sabah Chinese to join.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about a news report that he would be appointing a Chinese special assistant and a Chinese press secretary.

He replied that this would help enlighten him more on the thinking of the Chinese community.

"We have been hearing so much noise from the Chinese, so we want to know what it's all about," he said in a lighter vein.

Dr Mahathir said the proposed appointments of the Chinese officers had nothing to do at all with the notion among certain quarters that the MCA had not effectively represented the majority of the Chinese in the country.

"Likewise if I appoint a Malay political secretary, it does not mean that Umno Cabinet members are useless," he said.

Asked when would Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin be back from his two months' leave, the prime minister said: "He will be on leave until the end of this month. The end of this month is not here yet. So he is entitled not to be here."

-- BERNAMA

MAM MS RYN