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Mahathir-Warning

UMNO'S PURGE AGAINST MONEY-POLITICS A WARNING TO MEMBERS

KUALA LUMPUR, JUN 19 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the party's purge against money politics serves as a warning to Umno members not to indulge in such malpractice.

"What we want to do is to clean up the party and it serves as a warning that anybody who uses unacceptable methods of campaigning will have (disciplinary) actions taken against them," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a media conference after addressing about 2,000 Umno leaders from party divisions up to the Supreme Council at a pre-general assembly meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here today.

The session was held ahead of Umno's 55th general assembly starting Thursday which will be preceded by annual assemblies of the Youth and Wanita movements tomorrow at the same venue.

Dr Mahathir was asked whether the Umno Disciplinary Board's recent punishment of offenders found guilty of resorting to money politics would rejuvenate Umno, the lynchpin of the 14-member ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition.

"Whether rejuvenate or not, I don't know," he replied.

Dr Mahathir said that during the closed-door meeting, he briefed the leaders on the process used in determining those guilty or otherwise of money politics.

"I explained to them that in a matter such as this, some may go unpunished and the unlucky ones get caught. The same applies to the country's legal system, many people commit murder but not all murderers get caught," he said.

Asked about resentment among members caused by the disciplinary board's actions, Dr Mahathir said: "I do not notice any resentment. They seemed to accept what I said. Of course there will always be the dissatisfied lot..."

Asked on the notion held by certain quarters that the board was practising double standard, Dr Mahathir said such perception existed everywhere.

"If we are the aggrieved party, we will feel that the action is improper," he said.

The board had so far suspended 12 division-level leaders including five division chiefs whom it found guilty of resorting to money politics.

Asked on former Umno deputy president Tun Ghafar Baba's proposal that the purge against money politics be also targeted at Supreme Council members as well, Dr Mahathir said it could be done.

"The easiest way to clean up the supreme council is not to elect the unclean ones. Those sitting on the council are those chosen by the delegates. The delegates chose them, not us.

"I appoint a menteri besar to sit on the council, but then again the menteri besar is also elected by the people. If we despise him... then do not elect him at all from the very outset. Some said that those in the council are no different. Yes, no difference... But you (the delegates) are the ones who chose them. Do not elect them then," he said.

Asked whether he would be making a major announcement in his presidential address when opening the general assembly on Thursday, Dr Mahathir said in a lighter vein: "You have to wait for it. Give you some tension. If I tell you now, no more funlah, you may not come also."

-- BERNAMA
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