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Mahathir-Umno

UMNO SERIOUS IN TAKING ACTION, WILL NOT GIVE IN TO THREATS, SAYS PM

JOHOR BAHRU, May 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Umno will not give in to threats by its members found guilty of indulging in money politics by the party's Disciplinary Board to leave the party.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that if the party were to give in to such threats, it would be seen as not serious in its action.

"If we were to give in, it means that we are not serious (in taking action)," he told a news conference after opening the 55th MIC annual general assembly here.

He believed that the members making such threats had felt slighted and a little disappointed over the action taken against them but would readily accept it after giving it much thought.

"I feel that Umno members sometimes make rather hasty statements...maybe they will think it over," he said when asked to comment on the statement by Muar Umno division chief Datuk Abdullah Omar following the action taken by the Umno Disciplinary Board on May 5.

Abdullah, who is deputy executive chairman of KFC Holdings (M) Bhd, won the post after defeating incumbent Malik Munip at the division's delegates' meeting on April 28.

Abdullah was reported to have said that he might leave Umno but his intention was not a threat issued to the party which would hear his appeal tomorrow.

Among others, Abdullah said that the donation of 57 units of computers by the KFC Holdings to the rural residents of Muar was inappropriately linked to money politics because they were not meant for Umno members but for the benefit of the community.

Dr Mahathir said that Umno members wishing to donate money to the party should hand them over to the Umno headquarters or the state Umno liaison bodies for distribution.

"As such, allegations that we are making donations to garner support will not arise.

"If we truly love Umno, donate to the headquarters and the liaison bodies which will distribute them to all Umno members instead of only to our own division," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it would be difficult to escape such allegations because when donations were made only to their own division, it would be inclined to be regarded as a bid to win the support of the division.

He said that it was not necessary for Umno to introduce a code of ethics pertaining to money politics in the party because Umno already had various codes of ethics and it would not mean anything if actions were not taken.

In jest, the prime minister said that the media should also support Umno's efforts to clean the party of money politics.

"Therefore I hope the press will also support this action. The press are very important people..." he said in laughter joined by MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman who were present at the media conference.

On his two-day visit to the state, Dr Mahathir said that he met all the grassroot leaders at four Umno divisions -- Segamat, Bakri, Pontian and Gelang Patah -- which provided him an opportunity to explain problems in Umno and measures needed to be taken to overcome them.

"At the same time, I also had the opportunity to hear the views of divisions over their problems and their perception of Umno's problems and these are most valuable to me," he said, adding that the visit was very useful in further enhancing federal and grassroots relations.

-- BERNAMA

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