

18 JUN 2003

Mahathir-Harakah

NO ACTION AGAINST HARAKAH OVER CARICATURE, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, June 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that the government would not take action against Harakah, the official organ of PAS, over the publication of a caricature of him in its June 16-30 issue.

The Prime Minister said any action taken against Harakah would reduce the level of intelligence of the Umno-led government to that of those supporting PAS.

"Yes (no action will be taken). We have studied the matter and we feel that we cannot lower ourselves to the level of these people. These people called God a thug, said that God uttered profanities...so if we reprimand them here we will be like them too," he told reporters after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting here.

Harakah published a two-frame cartoon, one associating "kхинzir" (a pig) with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the other associating "mahazir!" (Dr Mahathir) with people's religious schools (SAR).

Many Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders took exception to the cartoon and urged the Home Ministry to revoke the publishing permit of the paper for insulting Dr Mahathir.

Asked whether inaction by the government might lead to worse things to happen as the newspaper had repeatedly insulted him and other Umno leaders, he said: "We will see."

On whether he would accept the apology offered by Harakah, Dr Mahathir said he did not receive any apology from the newspaper.

"I've not heard of any apology. None, when did they apologise? If they told that to newspapers, that is their problem. We have not received any apology," he said.

Harakah, in a two-paragraph statement, yesterday said it was withdrawing the caricature, drawn by cartoonist Zunar.

The paper also apologised to parties who felt insulted and took offence to the publication of the cartoon, which it said was not done with malicious intent.

-- BERNAMA

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