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UMNO TO MOUNT INFO CAMPAIGN OVER ARTICLE CRITICAL OF DR M

KANGAR, April 26 (Bernama) -- Umno will mount a campaign to explain the struggle, sacrifices and contributions of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Malaysia following the publication of a misleading article in The Economist of London.

Umno Information Chief Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayob said the campaign was aimed at refuting the claims made in the article by one Christopher Lockwood.

The campaign was important so that the people would not be confused in the run up to the general election, he told reporters after opening the Kangar Umno Division Delegates Conference here.

Megat Junid said the article in the April 5 issue of the magazine was highly critical of Dr Mahathir's leadership and had the evil intention of setting Malaysians against each other.

It could also provide capital for opposition propoganda during the election campaign, he said.

"I hope Umno members will not be influenced by the article as there is ample proof of Dr Mahathir's immense contributions in the course of nearly 30 years of public service," Megat Junid said.

Megat Junid said even though the Prime Minister himself did not ask that his contributions be recognised and remembered, Malaysians still had the right to judge on their own all that Dr Mahathir had done for the country without being influenced by anyone let alone a foreigner.

He feared that the effect of the article could prove to be a heavy burden to the acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who would be succeeding Dr Mahathir.

Megat Junid did not discount the possibility that Lockwood could have visited the country and met certain groups before coming up with his article.

Opening the delegates conference, Megat Junid urged elected representatives to come over often and be close with the kampung people without waiting for certain activities to take place.

Megat Junid also hoped that wives of elected representatives would play a role in helping their husbands to be close with the people and not just accompanying them into the kampung "to display their beauty" which could lead to people hating them.

Speaking after opening the Bagan Umno Division delegates conference in Butterworth, Megat Junid advised Umno division heads not to stand in the way of young professionals and executives from joining the party.

"These groups should be given the opportunity to join Umno without any prejudice otherwise it will be a loss to the party if they joined the opposition ranks," he said.

He said the time had come for these young people to be given a place in the party without any feeling of prejudice.

"These young professionals should however be patient and not straight away go for toppling the old guards," he said.

Megat Junid said they should serve the party well so that their abilities could be evaluated by older members.

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