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Call to ban 'The Economist' for insulting PM

PENANG, Sun. - Puteri Umno head Azalina Othman Said today urged the Government to ban The Economist and close its office in the country.

She said the article, "A qualified success", was an insult to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the people.

"I am certain the reporter was lazy and depended on feedback, especially from the Opposition to produce the article.

"If the people did not like Dr Mahathir, they would have not allowed him to lead them for the past 21 years," she said after opening the Jelutong Umno division delegates' conference here.

Azalina was asked to comment on the article which had given false information on Dr Mahathir and his leadership.

Asked to comment on the action of 17 Jelutong Puteri Umno division delegates who stayed away from their delegates' conference here two weeks ago, Azalina said the case had been settled.

"The conference was valid because all relevant parties, including the State Umno liaison committee, were satisfied there were no irregularities.

"There is no problem and the case was over a small matter," she said.

The Puteri members had stayed away from the conference after they claimed they did not receive any notice on the meeting.

Earlier, Azalina reminded Umno members against bickering among themselves and forsaking efforts to ensure victory for the Barisan Nasional in the next general election.

"Some of us just want to be preoccupied with fighting for places or for certain people they want to lead them and in the process, they disrupt unity in Umno.

"There must be no such thing in Jelutong, although it was once known to be riddled with such elements.

"Let's close ranks in our preparation for the general election. If we have differing views on certain leaders, we can elect new ones when we hold our divisional elections next year," she said.

In Kuala Lumpur, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today that he did not see why international publications that belittle the country and its leaders should continue to be circulated locally.

He said the Government had no objection if the articles contained constructive criticism, but would not tolerate those that attacked the credibility of the country's leadership and looked down on Malaysia's capabilities.