

UMNO Members Will Not Be Influenced By Dr Mahathir's Open Letter
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KOTA BAHARU, March 20 (Bernama) -- The open letter issued by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to UMNO branch members last Friday, will not affect the support and loyalty of Kelantan UMNO members towards Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak as party president and prime minister.

State UMNO Liaison chief, Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed said so far, the action of the former premier was no threat and would not influence the members of 2,000 Kelantan UMNO branches.

"We have not detected any branch leader who is not supporting Datuk Seri Najib's leadership," he told reporters at a gathering with the Wisma Persekutuan community, here, today.

In an open letter via his blog on Friday, Dr Mahathir had, among others, called for a motion of no confidence to be tabled at the UMNO branch meetings against Najib as party president and prime minister.

Meanwhile, UMNO Supreme Council member Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid, when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's action, said it was wrong as he was no longer an UMNO member.

Mahdzir, who is also Education Minister, believed that UMNO branch members would not be influenced by Dr Mahathir's action to topple Najib.

Speaking after an event with Kelantan school heads and principals, he said he could not accept Dr Mahathir collaborating with DAP stalwart Lim Kit Siang, who all this while had been labelled by Dr Mahathir himself as anti-Malay.

In KLANG, another UMNO Supreme Council member, Datuk Irmohizam Ibrahim, said the party leaders and members would not be influenced by any effort to divide UMNO and would stand solidly behind Najib as party president and prime minister.

"UMNO members uphold the party's constitution," he told reporters after launching a Free Market programme, today.

Irmohizam, who is also the Member of Parliament for Kuala Selangor, reminded that UMNO and the government should not be dragged into the political polemics of the Opposition, but new ideas should instead be sought to help the people.

"The people, especially the young generation, are fed up with the no-ending political polemics.

"UMNO needs to focus on the people and be united in facing the actual challenges, which are the economic and security challenges, and how to tackle the rising cost of living," he said.

In KOTA KINABALU, Sabah UMNO Liaison secretary and Putatan division chief, Datuk Seri Yahya Hussin said UMNO always remained strong and able to continue with its agenda for the race, religion

and country although there were top leaders or former top leaders who left the party.

Going through the history of UMNO, he said there had been an instance where the UMNO president left the party as he did not share the party's stand at the time, but UMNO remained strong with the support of its members.

"In other instances later on, some top leaders left the party but the majority of the members did not follow. The party's history has been like this.

That's why it is called a sacred party. Just look at the former prime minister.

Who followed him?"

Yahya said this to reporters after simultaneously opening the annual meetings of 140 UMNO branches in the Putatan division today.

He said since its formation, UMNO members had been taught to be loyal to the party and to place the party's interest above personal interest, and when there was any internal issue, the members would reject any leader who tried to deviate from the party's struggle.

Earlier, in his speech, he reiterated Putatan UMNO's stand of rejecting the Mahathir declaration which was also signed by several opposition leaders, and the division's full support for Najib's leadership. In KOTA KINABALU, Sabah UMNO Liaison secretary and Putatan division chief, Datuk Seri Yahya Hussin said UMNO always remained strong and able to continue with its agenda for the race, religion and country although there were top leaders or former top leaders who left the party.

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Meanwhile, Penampang UMNO division chief, Datuk John Ambrose said as Dr Mahathir had quit UMNO and thus considered an outsider, he had no right to interfere in Umno's internal affairs and tell

the party members what to do.

"Mahathir is no God who can predict what will happen in the next general election," he said in reference to the open letter in which Dr Mahathir also said that Umno members could not wait until the 14th general election as UMNO led by Najib would lose and not be able to recover.

Ambrose said although Dr Mahathir had been using all sorts of tactics to get rid of Najib for his personal agenda, it was useless because Umno members were strongly behind Najib's leadership.

He advised UMNO branches which received the open letter to ignore it and considered it as a poison pen letter.

In KUALA LUMPUR, Lembah Pantai UMNO division chief Datuk Seri Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin said Dr Mahathir should not have issued the open letter as it could cause confusion.

However, he believed UMNO members including the 13,000 in the Lembah Pantai division would not be influenced by the open letter, which he viewed as trying to sabotage the party that Dr Mahathir himself had once helmed.

Raja Nong Chik was speaking to reporters after the joint opening of the annual meetings of the branches in the division by UMNO treasurer Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah, who is also Second Finance Minister.

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