

KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 31 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY HIS RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT THAT ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST THOSE STIRRING RACIAL ISSUES IN THE COUNTRY WAS A LAST WARNING THAT SHOULD BE HEEDED BY ALL QUARTERS.

THE PRIME MINISTER WAS ANGRY THAT THE ISSUES FACING THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING BUKIT CHINA, THE RADIOACTIVE WASTE DUMP IN PAPAN, THE COLLEGE-GENERAL IN PULAU PINANG AND THE MCA CRISIS, HAD BEEN BLOWN OUT OF PROPORTION, MAKING IT APPEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONFRONTED WITH A CRUCIAL CRISIS WITH THE PEOPLE.

+I ADMIT THERE ARE PROBLEMS BUT A NUMBER OF THESE SO-CALLED ISSUES CAN BE SETTLED IN AN AMICABLE WAY THROUGH TALKS WITH THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES WITHOUT THE INTERFERENCE OF PEOPLE SEEKING CHEAP PUBLICITY,+ HE STRESSED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR TOLD BERNAMA THAT AS A RESULT OF THE ACTION OF CERTAIN GROUPS GOING TO CAPITALIZE ON THESE ISSUES THE GOVERNMENT HAD DIFFICULTY DEALING WITH PROBLEMS REGARDING THE ENVIRONMENT, THE HISTORY OR CULTURE WITHOUT ITS EFFORTS BEING INTERPRETED AS SOMEHOW OR OTHER RELATED TO RACIAL POLITICS.

IN A SPEECH AT IPOH LAST WEEK, HE GAVE A DRESSING DOWN TO QUARTERS WHO DELIBERATELY RAISE COMMUNAL ISSUES AND WARNED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT HESITATE TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THEM.

ASKED TO ELABORATE ON WHAT ACTION THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE DID NOT HAVE TO BE SPECIFIC AND STRESSED THAT IT WOULD DEFINITELY BE A HARSH ONE.

+I AM MONITORING THE ACTION OF THE PEOPLE STIRRING RACIAL SENTIMENTS. WE WILL SEE WHAT ACTION WILL BE TAKEN IF PEOPLE LIKE TO TRY IT BY CONTINUING TO HARP ON RACIAL ISSUES,+ HE WARNED.

THE PRIME MINISTER HAD CAUTIONED THOSE CONCERNED AGAINST THINKING THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S SILENCE ALL THIS WHILE COULD GIVE THEM THE +CARTE BLANCHE+ TO DO AS THEY PLEASED, INCLUDING DEMONSTRATING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS AFRAID TO ACT AGAINST THEM.

+DO NOT THINK THAT A PERSON WHO APPEARS GENTLE AND IS ALWAYS SMILING IS A NICE PERSON WHO IS PLIABLE. WE MUST REMEMBER HIS BACKGROUND, FOR HIS BACKGROUND MAY BELIEVE HIS APPEARANCE,+ WAS HIS ADVICE TO THOSE WHO WERE TAKING HIM LIGHTLY.

+TODAY THE GOVERNMENT MAY NOT WISH TO SHOW ITS CLAWS. WE ARE STILL KEEPING QUIET BUT LET NOT ANYONE MAKE THE MISTAKE OF THINKING THAT OUR PATIENCE IS BOTTOMLESS. THERE IS A LIMIT.+

THE PRIME MINISTER POINTED OUT THAT THE MALAYS OF TODAY LED BY UMNO WERE MODERATE PEOPLE.

WARNING PEOPLE ORGANIZING DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ENTERTAIN ANY DEMAND MADE THROUGH FORCE, POINTING OUT THAT FORCE COULD BE COUNTERED BY FORCE.

+IF OTHERS GO TOO FAR, UMNO, I THINK, WILL NOT KEEP QUIET. UMNO WILL ACT. IF THE OBJECTIVE IS TO GET SOMETHING BY DEMONSTRATING, I BELIEVE UMNO CAN MOUNT A BIGGER DEMONSTRATION.

+I WISH TO WARN THOSE WHO DARE SAY THE GOVERNMENT IS WEAK AND AFRAID. I AM WARNING THAT ACTIONS SUCH AS DEMONSTRATIONS AND BOYCOTTS WILL BRING DIRE CONSEQUENCES UPON ALL QUARTERS, POSSIBLY EVEN THE INNOCENT.+ -- BERNAMA

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