

Dr M: No easy way back for Red leaders

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COMMUNIST leaders who claim they have repented and want to return to society must first pay for their crimes, Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said the Government could not accept at face value their claims that they had given up their struggle to overthrow the country.

Replying to Encik Mohamed Noh Rejab (BN-Tampin), Dr Mahathir said these leaders were responsible for the killings of security personnel and innocent people and the destruction of property.

"If other people commit such crimes, they are prosecuted and jailed or even hanged. We cannot accept them (communists) back just like that," he said.

Encik Mohamed Noh had asked whether the Government would allow people like Shamsiah Fakhir, the second ranking CPM leader now living in China, who had asked to be allowed to return to Malaysia saying she had repented.

Dr Mahathir said all such communists would first be held at detention camps to rehabilitate them and ensure they had given up their communist leanings.

If these people were responsible for killings and destruction of property, they would have to undergo the due process of the law, he said.

Dr Mahathir added that some communist countries were supporting the communist movement in the country.

The fact that some CPM leaders were residing overseas showed that their country of residence sympathised with their struggle, he said.

To a supplementary question from Hu Sepang (DAP-Rasah), Dr Mahathir said there were about 300 hardcore communists who had refused to give up their beliefs still being held in detention camps.

He said when he became Prime Minister, there were more than 2,000 people under detention. Except for the 300, the rest had been released.

Dr Mahathir also told Mr Hu that the Government did not consider anyone who opposed the Government as a communist.

"If we did, we would not have enough jails to hold them. The Honourable Member and other Opposition MPs would also not be seated before me if that were the case," he said.

To another supplementary question from Encik Zubir Embong (BN-Kuala Terengganu), Dr Mahathir said the Government was aware that the communists were trying to exert their influence through front organisations dealing with human rights, student bodies and unions.

He said this was why the Government detained some people spreading communist ideology during the ISA crackdown in November last year.

To the original question from Mr Fung Ket Wing (DAP-Sandakan), Dr Mahathir said that although there were only about 200 communist terrorists in Malaysian jungles presently, the Government still considered them a threat because they had been trying to overthrow the Government through violent means for the last 40 years.