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Parliament-Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 11 (Bernama) -- Many opposition party members, especially from the DAP and PAS, could have been arrested for raising religious and racial issues during the last general election, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said today.

However, the government did not act against them because the problem had not reached a dangerous level, he said when replying to a supplementary question from Encik Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Tanjung) at the Dewan Rakyat.

The assessment was made by the police who then recommended to the Home Minister to act according to the powers vested in him, he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is the Home Minister, also chided the opposition for its double standards.

He said the opposition treated a former minister like an +angel+ after he teamed up with them whereas they had viewed him like a +satan+ when he was in the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister earlier said he forgave Encik Lim for trying to make a speech when raising a question on allegations that many Barisan Nasional leaders also touched on religious and racial issues during the election campaigning. -- more

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Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the government launched Operation Lalang in 1987, which included the arrests of 14 leaders of BN components, because the racial tension then had caused some 20,000 people to flee to Singapore and sparked off stockpiling of food for fear of riots.

The government would not hesitate to act firmly on matters that could threaten the stability, public order and security of the nation, he added in his reply to the original question from Haji Buniyamin Yaakub (PAS-Bachok).

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the government always viewed seriously the preservation of peace and stability as they were the keys to national development.

The government would continue to take the necessary measures in accordance with the law to preserve public order and security to ensure the well-being of the people, he said.

As such, the question of whether an investigation would be carried out or a report tabled to the Dewan Rakyat on Haji Buniyamin's allegations about BN leaders raising religious and racial issues during the election did not arise. -- more

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The Prime Minister said it was inevitable that religious and racial issues would crop up at times in a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-culture country like Malaysia but problems arose when certain quarters indiscriminately exploited these issues to the extent of threatening the public order.

He added that there was a strong possibility that chaos might break out if the government did not take early and firm action to defuse the situation.

It could result in bloodshed and damage to property if left unchecked, he said. -- Bernama

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