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Mahathir-Spies

ACTION AGAINST THOSE INVOLVED IN AUSTRALIAN SPY ACTIVITIES

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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan. 27 (Bernama) -- The government will take action against opposition politicians found to be doing something against the interest of the nation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said today.

However, the government would be very careful before taking such action, he added.

"If they are found to be doing something that is against the interest of the nation, I am quite sure we need to do something... but we have to be very careful about this thing because we don't want to be seen persecuting opposition politicians... as you know that is not a very popular thing," he told reporters after opening an Asia Pacific Scientific meeting at a hotel here.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on Australian news reports that the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) paid bribes to Malaysian opposition politicians in an alleged unauthorised covert meddling in the internal political affairs of a foreign nation.

The report which quoted former ASIS field agents said the opposition politicians had over many years been receiving tens of thousands of dollars in bribes from the Australian spy agency. -- more

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He said the government would carry out its own investigation into the matter as well as keep a close watch on developments in Australia.

"This is something new... if it had not been reported in the Australian press and if the matter had not been raised by former intelligence officers in Australia, of course we would'nt know," he added.

The government would have to investigate whether the report was true and who were involved, although it was aware that this was not an easy task because it needed the cooperation of the Australian intelligence officers.

Dr Mahathir believed the Australian government would investigate the matter as they were the ones who raised the matter.

He said: "I suppose if they raised it they want to know because they are the people involved... of course we feel unhappy if the Australians try to influence domestic politics by financially supporting the opposition."

"We will watch the developments in Australia... I don't suppose that if we go and ask, they are going to say yes we have committed this crime... very difficult." -- Bernama

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