

PM: Don't fan racial sentiments

By Joseph
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LABUAN, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the authorities are watching and monitoring the campaign mounted by opposition parties in the general election, especially the tendency among some opposition leaders to fan racial sentiments.

The Prime Minister said the authorities have given some allowance during the election campaign but they would not hesitate to take action against those who broke the law, especially if they continued to fan racial hatred and feelings.

Dr Mahathir was asked if the authorities would take action against DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang if he continued to harp on sensitive issues in the campaign.

Speaking to reporters after opening the RM6.3 million Dataran Labuan, here, the Prime Minister said that if Kit Siang were to break the law, the authorities would take action, even when the election was about to be held.

He said the Government has shown some leniency (in the campaign), but stressed that it would not compromise on the rule of law, a point which Kit Siang had often spoken about.

Dr Mahathir said the authorities were monitoring the situation and Kit Siang very closely. If he was found to be fanning racial sentiments excessively, if there was proof and if this led to racial tension, then the authorities would act regardless of what the world would say.

The Prime Minister said Kit Siang was getting increasingly arrogant, especially when he seemed to be getting the help of some foreign journalists and other quarters overseas.

These quarters seemed to subscribe to the view that opposition parties were above the law, even when



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they broke the law. They also seemed to believe that it was all right for members of the Opposition not to pay toll charges and ignore the police.

The Prime Minister said these quarters would credit the Opposition for taking this position. "In fact, the foreign journalists and magazines would praise him for adopting this stand," Dr Mahathir said.

If the authorities were to take action against such acts, they would be criticised. "I don't understand the interpretation of democracy these people subscribe to, especially when the Opposition is seen to be above the law but the Government party is not."

The Government has been fair and had even taken action against Government Ministers, and still the foreign Press said there was no democracy in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said.

Kit Siang has also dared the police to arrest him. "This shows his arrogance, and people with such kind of arrogance do not get the support from the local media."

The Prime Minister said: "The foreign Press would like to see unrest in Malaysia ... where the Government is weak and forever under pressure and threat

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PM exposes Lim's ulterior motives

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from opposition parties.

"To them, this is democracy ... development is not democracy but riots and chaos are ... we don't subscribe to this interpretation of democracy."

Dr Mahathir said the Government was responsible to the nation, and not to the world. He said if there was going to be riots in Malaysia, no one else would come to the country's help, as seen in places like Rwanda.

In fact, they would incite more riots as this would retard the country's growth. When this happens, Malaysia would no longer be able to compete

with others, he said.

Asked whether action against Kit Siang would be turned into an issue in the election campaign, the Prime Minister said the DAP would certainly politicise the matter since it has no issue to harp on.

Dr Mahathir said that in raising sensitive issues, the Opposition Leader's real intention was for the Government to take action against him so that the world could accuse the Government of being autocratic and cruel.

Asked to comment on Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) effort to go national with a new name, Parti

Bersatu SeMalaysia, Dr Mahathir said the Sabah-based opposition party was day-dreaming.

He said DAP and Pas, which are bigger parties, are not going nationwide as they cannot even get enough candidates to contest in the election.

Earlier, in his speech on development in Labuan, the Prime Minister said he was happy with the progress the island was making after being declared a Federal Territory and an International Off-shore Financial Centre (IOFC).

Dr Mahathir said the Government would con-

tinue to develop Labuan's economic and tourism industries and plans to make Labuan an "island of flowers".

He said measures would be taken to attract more investors to the island. Many foreign off-shore financial institutions have set up their bases in Labuan and there are still more who are intending to open up investment centres here.

Some of the foreign financial institutions who plan to come to Labuan are now operating in Kuala Lumpur and would move to the island when the building of the Financial Park is completed.