

16 OCT 1996

Parliament-Money

ALL POLITICAL PARTIES SHOULD ERADICATE MONEY POLITICS, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that all political parties should take appropriate measures to ensure that money politics is curbed effectively.

"Money politics whether in Umno or other parties including the opposition is an epidemic that should be checked before it becomes widespread and destroys the whole administrative system in the country," he said in reply to Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong) during question time in the Dewan Rakyat.

He said that Umno regarded money politics and corruption as having very serious implications.

Umno, he said, had come up with rulings to curb not only money politics but also all manner of corrupt practices.

Dr Mahathir said that in the Umno general assembly last week, the delegates unanimously agreed to reject money politics and were determined to eradicate the practice.

In reply to a supplementary question by Tan on whether the government plans to extend the scope of regulations on corruption so that such practice would not turn into a political culture in the country, Dr Mahathir said that existing prevention of corruption measures were adequate.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, however said that there would be wider implications if corruption was rampant in political parties than among government servants.

"That is why Umno has right from the beginning adopted a very serious view and taken stern action although it has not been fully determined whether there has been corruption because of insufficient evidence," he said.

"And if taken to court, it will surely be dismissed as there is insufficient evidence that corruption has taken place. As for Umno, we view the matter seriously and will take action," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is Home Minister, said that the ministry was prepared to provide services to any political party requiring investigations to be conducted not only relating to corruption but also on other matters.

Dr Mahathir said that although an independent body had been set up to check corrupt practices in the country, it was difficult to prove that corruption had taken place.

"That is why, try as we may, corruption will to some extent still occur," he said.

"I know of a country where they shoot those involved in corruption but corruption still takes place," he said in reply to a supplementary question by Shukri Mohamed (BN-Machang).

Replying to a supplementary question by Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Tanjung) on whether he would direct the Anti Corruption Agency (ACA) to investigate Cabinet ministers whose living expenses far exceed their monthly salary, Dr Mahathir said that the matter did not arise.

He said that Lim had misunderstood his speech made at the Umno general assembly.

Dr Mahathir said he had stated that there could have been corruption if ministers were to spend more than they earn but he had not pointed out any minister who had spent beyond his means.

He said that in Malaysia, when ministers retire, they were usually poor

unlike in some countries where corruption was rampant. "For as long as Umno rules, we will not see a minister, who, when he retires, becomes rich," he added. -- BERNAMA

HS/ARA RM