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Mahathir-Leaders

LEADERS RESORTING TO MONEY POLITICS WILL DESTROY THE NATION, SAYS PM

KOTA KINABALU, Aug 31 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the dignity of the race will be undermined if leaders resorting to money politics are allowed to hold posts in the government.

"He may only resort to selling himself now but he may sell the country later," he told reporters at the old airport here before leaving for Tawau to visit the Danum Valley forest research centre.

Referring to the ban on campaigning in the run-up to the October Umno elections, Dr Mahathir said that leaders who resorted to money politics would destroy the nation.

"If candidates, who at the outset are corrupt, surely when they hold posts in the government, corrupt practices will be his way of life," he said.

Asked on alleged dissatisfaction expressed by some leaders over the ban, Dr Mahathir said: "I am also not satisfied...I believe that campaigns are good. But there should be a proper way. When campaigns become unhealthy, involving money and threats, it is better not to have them. Although it is regarded as undemocratic, it is better to save democracy and put a stop to campaignings.

"Therefore, party members could act to ensure that such a ban is no longer needed, by campaigning based on their own capabilities and not by using money," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that many ways had been considered to curb money politics including appealing to those involved to stop such practices but "we still hear of people willing to compromise their dignity...to sell themselves."

He said that the best way to overcome such tendencies was to promote noble values to develop a race who uphold high principles.

He also said that he did not lend support to any candidates in the Umno election or any independent candidates in the Sarawak state election next week as claimed by some of the independent candidates.

Some independent candidates were said to have claimed that they had received the blessings of Dr Mahathir and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to contest in the Sept 7-8 election.

"I feel very upset if there are still people who believe that eventhough I have not said it, I have given my support to certain people.

"Even in the Umno election there are such claims...to the extent that it was mentioned in foreign magazines that I am believed to have secretly sent my men to submit the names of candidates I am supporting. This may be the same thing resorted to by these independent candidates," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that there was nothing he could do if there were people still willing to believe such allegations because he had repeatedly stated that he was not lending support to anyone and would accept anyone capable of becoming leaders.

"If I were to lend my support to someone but he were to lose, it would be difficult to accept the person who wins. That is why I am not giving my support to anyone," he said.

Commenting on Barisan Nasional (BN) members contesting as independents in Sarawak, he said that any candidate challenging the official BN candidates in the state election would be expelled. -- BERNAMA

JS RM

