

24 JUL 1996

Mahathir-Signal

MAHATHIR SAYS HE IS WILLING TO CARRY ON AS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, July 24 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is willing to continue leading the government as long as he is needed.

Nevertheless, the Prime Minister said he is also prepared to step down if he receives a clear signal to do so.

"It is difficult to know when people don't like you. But I ask God and my colleagues in the government that should there be a clear signal, I will step down," he said at a luncheon here to mark his 15th year in office as Prime Minister.

However, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who organised the luncheon with other Cabinet ministers, had earlier voiced his loyalty and that of his colleagues in the government for Dr Mahathir.

Anwar, in his speech, conveyed the pledge of loyalty in verse which went as follows:

Angkut-angkut terbang ke langit,  
Mati disambar anak merbah,  
Tertangkap bumi dengan langit,  
Setia kita tidak akan berubah.

The Prime Minister said if his service is still needed, then his colleagues in the government should hide the signal.

Referring to his presence at the luncheon, Dr Mahathir said in jest that he was in two minds about attending as he worried he might be seen as having stayed too long as head of the government.

"In fact, I try to forget that I have been (premier) for 15 years (because) I worry people might say it's too long," he said to the laughter from about 600 guests.

The guests included ministers, former ministers, deputy ministers, parliamentary secretaries, menteri besar, chief ministers, members of Parliament, political party leaders and heads of departments.

The opposition leaders present included DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang, Kelantan PAS commissioner and Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Nik Aziz Nik Mat, Parti Melayu Semangat 46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Parti Bersatu Sabah president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan.

The Prime Minister was pleased with the presence of opposition party leaders at the luncheon, which he said demonstrated clearly the strong solidarity of the people despite their differences in opinions.

He said in some countries, such differences between government and opposition parties could erupt into war and killing.

"In Malaysia, when we disagree, we just talk," he said before thanking the leaders of opposition parties who were present.

He said the future of the nation would be bright if the attitude shown by all those present at the luncheon was continued.

Anwar said the government members and the people feel fondness and respect for Dr Mahathir as the leader and Prime Minister who has succeeded in redeeming the dignity of Malaysians, restoring their confidence in themselves and kindle in them the will to pursue excellence.

He said the policies to transform the economy introduced by Dr Mahathir over the past 15 years had gradually freed Malaysia from dependence on the economic power of the developed countries.

Anwar said Dr Mahathir has also emerged as the voice of the developing countries which were still held in the clutches of the unfair world

economic system.

"A people will only become supreme if their leader possesses a supreme vision and the people are with him in achieving that supremacy," he said.

He said he counted himself as among millions of people who believe and have confidence in the vision of Dr Mahathir.

"It was because of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir and his vision that I became fully determined to join his government 14 years ago," he said before reciting another verse as follows:

Kalau tidak kerana kilauan,  
Tidak terlihat ikan di kali,  
Kalau tidak kerana tuan,  
Mana mungkin saya di sini. -- BERNAMA  
AH AFY CTL