

15 MAR 1996

Mahathir-wealth

ROBIN HOOD CONCEPT NOT SUITABLE IN MALAYSIA, SAYS PM

KUCHING, March 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today rejected the Robin Hood concept of robbing the rich to give to the poor because it means that a person improves his lot at the expense of others.

He said although the people of Malaysia were encouraged to strive for progress, it should not be through discrimination and oppression of certain parties, ostensibly to defend the party that is said to be weak.

"The Robin Hood concept may be suitable in the era of oppression by the Sheriff of Nottingham but in a civilised, cultured and law-abiding society the concept is no longer suitable," he said when opening the Judges Conference, here.

The prime minister used Robin Hood in reference to some court decisions which he said could victimise the poor as a result of the exorbitant sums awarded in damages although this was considered justice by the courts.

He said the result of high awards in damages, for example in land cases, was a rise in the cost of living for the people because ultimately it was the buyers or tenants of the buildings, and not the land developers, who had to pay.

Dr Mahathir said that in court all parties must obtain justice, namely a fair consideration and judgment, and the court was not a place for one to vent his anger, seek revenge or rob the rich to give to the poor.

"Robbing, even from the rich and the government, is a crime just like robbing the poor.

"We do not want to see anyone robbing another. In an ideal society there is no robbery. But if there is, the action and the punishment must be the same," he told 75 judges of the Federal Court, Court of Appeal and High Court attending the two-day conference.

He said that in the West justice for the majority was no longer considered important, what was important and given priority was the individual right.

But in Malaysia, he said, the government felt that while the individual right should be protected, the right of the majority of society must also be given equal consideration.

"For us this is justice. Any assessment that favours any party, poor or rich, cannot be considered just," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that for a developing country like Malaysia where economic activity was important, all efforts to curb the prices of goods and services, that is the cost of living, were important.

This was connected to the happiness of the people, especially the poor who numbered more than the rich.

The individual in a society could look for wealth and improve his lot without causing losses to society but the individual could also do it by victimising and causing loss to society, he said.

The prime minister said that although the concept of justice in the Malaysian society differed from that of the developed society in the West, it did not mean that Malaysia rejected all the Western ways and views on justice.

He praised the West's orderly system of judicial process which he said was very good and should be accepted.

The same applied to its codification of the law which was good for standardising the laws and legal process so that as far as possible the

judge's perception and ideology of a certain matter would not influence his judgment, he said.

Dr Mahathir said no one could deny that the standardisation and enforcement of laws was something good that made justice more attainable.

"We cannot reject something from the West just because it comes from the West. What is good we keep, what is not we throw away," he added. --

Bernama

AU JK