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Parliament-DAP

DAP PREPARED TO DEFEND DR MAHATHIR AGAINST WESTERN PRESSURE

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 20 (Bernama) -- The DAP told the Dewan Rakyat today that the party will be staunchly behind Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in the event of interference by the West to pressure for a change in the country's leadership.

DAP Secretary-General Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Tanjong) made the pledge during the debate on the 1998 Budget.

"Although the DAP is an opposition party, we will give our full support to Dr Mahathir if the United States or any other Western nation tries to interfere in Malaysia's internal affairs by pressing for a change in its political leadership which they resent," he said.

Lim, who is opposition leader, said that whether or not Dr Mahathir is the prime minister of Malaysia is the business of the people of Malaysia and not the business of the United States or any other Western nation.

He was referring to a caricature which appeared in the New Sunday Times yesterday where "Uncle Sam" was depicted as being used by the Western media and pressing for a change in the political leadership in Malaysia, saying "Change Your Leaders Or We Will Take All Your Money".

Lim, who spoke for about 45 minutes, also said that the DAP was giving its full backing to Dr Mahathir and the government in overcoming the currency and stock market crisis through even stronger fundamentals.

He however said that the party wanted the prime minister to be more cautious in issuing statements at this time when all sectors were making efforts to restore confidence in the nation's economy.

He also said that the people in the country should be more discerning when reading foreign media reports on Malaysia.

"While the DAP does not approve of Dr Mahathir's outbursts which put not only him but also Malaysia's economy at a disadvantage, the DAP supports his proposal that there should be some control to curb attacks and manipulation in the international currency market," he said.

On the 1998 Budget, he said that the proposal for an increase in the fees for passports and driving licences to earn an additional revenue of RM280 million was unfair and burdensome for the public.

He said that such a measure need not be taken if the company tax was reduced from 30 per cent to 28.5 per cent instead of 28 per cent because a reduction of 0.5 per cent was not only adequate but far exceeded the amount of RM280 million.

On the war against corruption launched by the government, Lim said that the Anti Corruption Agency (ACA) should table in the Dewan Rakyat the report of investigations on six ministers, two deputy ministers, a parliamentary secretary and eight state executive councillors to gain the confidence of the people.

He also called on the Cabinet to renegotiate the contract with Projek Lebuhraya Utara-Selatan (Plus) in respect of toll charges as public interest was affected by the annual increases in toll charges due to the unfair privatisation contract.

Lim said that a privatisation watchdog commission should be set up to provide a mechanism to ensure that projects privatised in the interest of the public really benefited the people.

He cited the 15-year contract awarded to the Fomema consortium to conduct medical examination on foreign immigrants as another example of such privatised project. -- BERNAMA

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