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PM warns big-spending leaders (HL)

Tengku Sariffuddin; Satwant Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said action would be taken against government leaders who lead a lifestyle beyond the income they had declared when they were appointed.

He said action would also be taken against them if they failed to disclose their assets accurately.

However, he said there was no need for Ministers, Menteri Besar, Chief Ministers and Executive Councillors to make a statutory declaration as the existing practice was equivalent to it.

"The declaration of assets has been going on smoothly and I am satisfied they are making a true declaration," he said in the Dewan Negara in a reply to a supplementary question by Senator Ibrahim Ali.

Ibrahim had said they should make an annual statutory declaration to ensure greater public confidence in the Government.

To another question by Senator Datuk Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman, Dr Mahathir said it was important for the Government to have the credibility and enjoy the confidence of the people.

In this respect, he said, government leaders must not only be clean but also seen to be clean.

"That is why we always emphasise on the need to avoid a situation where other people can accuse us of being corrupt. There may not be any corruption but we are seen to be corrupt.

"People ask why we (government leaders) have so much money when we should not be having that amount of money ... probably there is a genuine reason for having so much money but for other people such a situation is evidence there is corruption."

To another question by Ibrahim on whether the statement by some Pas members in Kelantan that those who support the party would go to heaven was a form of corruption, Dr Mahathir said Muslims should not be misled by such tactics as it would undermine their faith in the religion.

"They (Pas) promise to give something which they are not in a position to give. This is worse. It undermines our belief in Islam... as if they are the registrar of heaven."

Dr Mahathir said the Pas tactic to gain support in such a manner was a serious violation of Islamic teachings, adding the tactic was normally associated with confidence tricksters.

"But because there are many Muslims who have little knowledge of Islam they fall for such tricks."

Replying to Senator Yim Chee Chong, Dr Mahathir said it was up to the Anti-Corruption Agency to investigate if there was abuse of public funds in the purchase of shares which resulted in a loss by the Kelantan Government.

Datuk Rozali Isohak, who was then Kelantan's Deputy Menteri Besar II, had claimed last year that the Kelantan State Economic Development Corporation had suffered losses amounting to RM14.3 million in the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange.

He had alleged that some officers in SEDC had conducted share transactions for the agency without proper authorisation. The allegations were denied by the agency.

On the level of corruption in Kelantan, he said it was difficult to measure.

"There is no dacing (a scale which is also the Barisan Nasional symbol).

If there is a scale, it will be a bit easier to measure. However, I am confident once Umno is in power in Kelantan, it will be clean."

Replying to Senator Datuk Abu Bakar Ismail, the Prime Minister said that between 1990 and now, the ACA had arrested 301 people for giving bribes.

Dr Mahathir, who is Home Minister, said the Government was reviewing the laws on corruption, particularly the sections dealing with penalties.

He said under the Prevention of Corruption Act 1961, the giver, receiver and the intermediary, could all be subjected to penalties.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said he was confident the ACA officers had the ability to discharge their duties well.

He said the ACA had introduced various measures to enable the public to make complaints, including a toll-free line with an officer on duty until 10pm, and a Home Page.

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