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An act of disloyalty (HL)

Ashraf Abdullah; Hayati Hayatudin

PETALING JAYA, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysians who criticise the country from abroad have no love for the nation.

Dr Mahathir likened their action to the message featured in the Malay saying of meludah ke langit jatuh ke atas muka sendiri (painting themselves with dirt).

The Prime Minister was asked by reporters to comment on reports that a small group of supporters of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had gone overseas to seek support and sympathy for Anwar.

Asked if their action could be considered as treason, the Prime Minister said: "I don't know about treason but I think people who have any love for their own country would not do that."

He said if they had a problem in Malaysia, it should be settled within the country.

"You don't go around running down your own country elsewhere," he told reporters after opening the International Invention, Innovation, Industrial Design and Technology Exhibition (ITEX '98) at Sunway Pyramid. (See Page 3)

Asked if action would be taken against them, he said there was nothing that the Government could do unless they violated the laws.

Three Anwar supporters - former Umno Youth assistant secretary Saifudin Nasution Ismail, former Penang Umno Youth chief Abdul Rahim Ghouse, and Anwar's former political secretary Mohamad Ezam Mohd Noor - are reportedly abroad.

The three were among 10 Umno members expelled from the party by the supreme council on Tuesday for taking part in anti-Umno activities.

Lately, they had been faxing Press statements from Jakarta, Bangkok and Manila.

On Thursday, Saifudin issued a statement with a Bangkok dateline, commenting on his expulsion from Umno and calling for Dr Mahathir to resign.

On the same day, Rahim and Ezam, claiming to be in Manila, had also issued a joint statement. The two had also previously issued statements from Manila and Jakarta respectively.

Yesterday, commenting on these statements, Foreign Minister and Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said if the supporters wanted change, they could return to the country and talk to the people.

"Whatever problems we are facing, including those related to the leadership, we should let Malaysians decide.

"They should not go abroad to beg for foreigners to help in their cause. Have they no confidence in their own ability to obtain support from the rakyat?" Abdullah had said.

Asked to comment on Malaysia's election to a non-permanent United Nations Security Council seat, Dr Mahathir said he was happy because Malaysia managed to get the highest number of votes.

On the role it would play as a member of the Security Council, he said Malaysia would stick to the facts whenever it commented or decided on anything.

"We will not be biased, we will stick to our principles and be free from all influences. We will make only fair comments," he said.

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