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Mahathir-Riots

DEMOS AND RIOTS NO PLACE IN M'SIA, SAYS DR M

KOTA KINABALU, Nov 27 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysians must be grateful as the economic slowdown faced by the country had not triggered racial and religious riots as had erupted in certain countries.

The prime minister said the prevailing peace in Malaysia must be maintained to guarantee the country's future.

"Unfortunately, some people are trying to incite riots in our country as they are carried away by the happenings in a neighbouring country," he said when addressing the Barisan Nasional (BN) Youth gathering at the Likas sports complex, near here.

He said there was no need for demonstrations and riots as Malaysia is a peaceful country.

"Malaysia is a democratic country. If there are people who want to initiate changes or change the leader, they can do so by contesting in the election," he said.

Dr Mahathir arrived here today for a two-day working visit to Sabah.

"If the people are really supporting you at that time (during election), you may win," he said, adding that the BN and its youth movement would ensure this did not materialise.

He described those who instigated demonstrations and street protests as people who had no confidence of winning in the election.

Supporters of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim held illegal assemblies and street protests particularly in the federal capital to topple the country's leadership.

"There is no need to wear head bands, shout slogans, torch motorcycles or use molotov cocktails. What we in the BN need is sound and rational thinking to assess who should lead the government," he said.

He said the present set of leaders were responsible people who strived to develop the country before paving the way for the younger generation to take over.

"This is the duty of the elders, there is no generation gap between the old and the young in the BN as it is a continuing process," said Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman.

He also chided those who newly joined the BN struggle but aspired to become leaders.

Dr Mahathir said he himself and several other BN leaders struggled for a long time to reach the present position.

"It took me 18 years in Umno to be selected as a candidate to contest in the general election, 28 years to become a minister, 34 years to be the deputy prime minister and only after 36 years, I became the prime minister," he said.

Dr Mahathir said some people were impatient to become leaders and resorted to toppling their superiors despite been given the assurance of succeeding them.

"These people will do anything to become leaders. They will conspire and find friends from within and outside the country to take over the leadership," he said.

Dr Mahathir said their friends overseas were disappointed when their "puppet" leader groomed to take over the leadership failed to do so due to other reasons.

"Our country is a democratic and a sovereign nation. We have integrity

and we will decide on our country's fate. We do not want others to interfere at all," he added.

-- BERNAMA

MAM TS