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Mahathir-Judiciary

M'SIAN JUDICIARY NOT BEHOLDEN TO GOVERNMENT, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 15 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the judiciary in Malaysia is not beholden to the government and in fact had in many instances made rulings against the government.

The prime minister said the government had always abided by court rulings and had never complained even when they were not favourable.

He said this at a news conference here in response to questions on the concerns expressed by certain quarters abroad on the impartiality of the Malaysian judiciary in the trial of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"We are not saying that it is unjust but (this is) the same judiciary that declared Umno an illegal party. We had to reform Umno ... we were put into very big trouble by that decision," he said at the news conference after chairing a Barisan Nasional pre-council meeting at Parliament House, here.

Umno was declared an illegal organisation by the high court in 1987 after several members sought court redress over certain grievances arising from the party polls that year.

Dr Mahathir said the judiciary had in the past sentenced many party officials, including those who held high posts in the government such as ministers, menteri besar and chief ministers.

"They were convicted by the judiciary but we never complained, we didn't demonstrate," he said.

Whereas in the case of the opposition, there was an instance where the court fined a member of parliament less than RM2,000 for a certain offence which allowed him to retain his seat.

(Under the law, an MP may be disqualified if he is fined RM,2000 or sentenced to a year's jail).

"... but we didn't protest. So, the judiciary in Malaysia is not beholden to the government, unlike the judiciary in some other countries where you can be sure they will decide for the government and make sure whoever attacks the government will be punished to the point where there will be no return for them," Dr Mahathir said.

The prime minister said that in Malaysia "it seems to us that decisions are made without any regard to the government, not at all."

On demands by certain groups in the United States that Malaysia ensure justice is done in Anwar's case, Dr Mahathir said they should take a look at themselves.

"They should look at themselves, when white police beat the blacks half-dead, the courts decided that the police were not guilty... as a result riots occurred in Los Angeles.

"Recently, a black man was dragged with a lorry until he died, a Japanese asking for directions was shot by a house-owner fearing that he was a robber.

"And what was the court decision? Not guilty (because) he could shoot anyone...this is their kind of justice.

"They preach to us about justice when over here we do not discriminate over the hair, skin colour, government or non-government..." he said

Asked about statements from Asean countries on domestic developments in Malaysia, especially Anwar's case, Dr Mahathir said it was their right to do so.

By the same token, Malaysia could also comment on things happening in

their countries, he said.

However, he said: "I wish they would give a chance for the courts to decide ... this is the legal system in this country, maybe in their country it is not the courts which decide ... it is the mob on the streets who decides ...

"But in our system, the courts make the decision and the people make the decision through the process of democratic elections ..." he said.

-- BERNAMA

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