

15/10/1998

'Justice can't be sought through show of strength and violence'

SHAH ALAM, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the country could fall into a state of anarchy if the people did not uphold the system of democracy and the judiciary.

Dr Mahathir said recent trends showed that certain groups had begun to seek street justice and mob rule. These actions indicated they had no respect for the country's democratic system or the judiciary.

"If this continues, I am afraid the country will no longer be peaceful and the people will suffer. The matter will be made worse if both conflicting sides did the same and clashed with one another," he told a Press conference after launching the national-level Unity Day at Dewan Jubli Perak.

Dr Mahathir said justice could not possibly be sought through a show of strength and violence.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia broke away from feudalism practised by the Malay Sultans before Malaysia was colonialised, but opted for the democratic system.

Unlike feudalism, Dr Mahathir said, democracy enabled all Malaysians to choose their own leaders and the Government.

"The party which gets more seats in the elections will form the Government. Parties which do not get majority support will form the Opposition.

"The Opposition is free to criticise the Government in Parliament," he said adding that in other countries, parties which lost would denounce the election results and take to the streets to protest.

However, he said, Opposition parties in Malaysia did not do so because they were allowed freely to voice their opinions in Parliament.

"The Opposition parties in some countries are not even given the opportunity to speak up," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said no one was in a position to question Malaysia's independent judiciary.

"Anyone who breaks the law will be charged and tried. The judge will decide whether the accused is guilty or not.

"If he is found guilty, he can still appeal to a higher court (Appeals Court). But if the court upholds the decision, he can still appeal to another court (the Federal Court) which will make the final decision.

"The decision must be accepted and respected by all," Dr Mahathir said.

He added that under the Malaysian system, no one could claim to be above the law.

"Everyone, including the person who holds the highest position to the person who is in the lowest rung, will receive the same treatment under the law.

"There is no favouritism. Anyone can be penalised if he is guilty of a crime," he said.

Dr Mahathir said even those who held very high positions had been convicted by the Malaysian courts for criminal offences.

"When they are tried, the court does not take into consideration the position they hold in the Government, however high their posts may be," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the process should be allowed to take its due course because no one would admit their guilt.

"It should be left to the courts to decide whether the person who is

charged with wrongdoings is guilty or not," he said.

Similarly, the Prime Minister said no one would admit that he was not qualified for a certain position.

"If one is given the opportunity to appoint someone to fill an important post, one will appoint himself," he said.

Therefore, Dr Mahathir said appointments and dismissals must be made according to certain procedures.

Dr Mahathir said those who insisted that laws should be enforced on others should not claim that the judiciary was not free when they themselves committed criminals offences.

The Prime Minister said it was the duty of all Malaysians to ensure that peace and harmony were maintained at all times.

"If there are riots or demonstrations, even tourists will stay away," he said, adding that tourist arrivals in Malaysia dropped by 25 per cent.

Also present at the Unity Day celebrations were National Unity and Social Development Minister Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail and Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar.

(END)