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Mahathir-Singapore

MAHATHIR THANKS OPPOSITION FOR SUPPORTING GOVT'S STAND

IPOH, Aug 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today thanked the opposition parties for supporting the Barisan Nasional government's stand on the relocation of the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) facilities from Tanjong Pagar to Woodlands in Singapore.

He said the solid support of Malaysians would give the government strength in facing the problem.

"Now we have to just wait (for developments on the issue)," he told reporters after a meet-the-people session at Stadium Indera Mulia, here.

He said the Malaysian immigration officers would continue to operate in Tanjong Pagar as the Singapore authorities had said that the time limit for Malaysia to agree to move to Woodlands had expired.

"We were prepare to stay in Woodlands. The problem is that it (Singapore) has said that the time for us to agree to stay in Woodlands has expired and it has not prepared a a place for us...only prepared to place two tables by the platform," he said.

"...it doesn't look nice and we have to take care of work comfort. Suddenly it says there is no place because we are late and have to move out to Johor Baharu...it's like being chased out," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir said the Singapore leaders had not contacted him to discuss the issue and the communications so far were through Malaysian officials.

Asked to comment on reports that Singapore had shortened the social visit stay for Malaysians to between three and nine days from with 14 days previously, he said it was Singapore's right to impose regulations on Malaysians entering the republic.

He said it was better for Malaysians to live and work in Malaysia and the move would not cause Malaysia any loss.

Dr Mahathir also said that any decision to ban the book, "50 Dalil Kenapa Anwar Tidak Boleh Jadi PM" (50 reasons Why Anwar Cannot Be PM) or action against the book publisher would only be taken after the police had concluded their investigation.

The government had first to know the whether the book's contents had any basis and if they did not, action would be taken against the publisher, he said.

Asked on the detention of a "Datuk" by the police in the course of the police investigation into the book, he said he did not know anything about it.

Although he was also Home Minister, the police need not inform him before making any arrest in an investigation, he said.

Asked whether the book was aimed at applying pressure on Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, he said he did not know, adding: "My observation is that he is still doing his work like usual."

When asked on the downgrading of the rating of Malaysia's sovereign risk from A- to BBB by Thomson Bankwatch, the world's largest bank rating agency, Dr Mahathir said: " They (the international speculators) have the power to destroy people and obviously they are using the power to destroy people."

He said: " What they do not want us to do is to try and save our economy and anything we try to do to save our economy, they will frustrate it."

" This is within their power and we do not have the power, so they can do what they like," he said.

-- BERNAMA  
HK JK