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Mahathir - Poisoning

MAHATHIR DENIES "MASS POISONING" OF IMMIGRANTS REPORTS

KUALA LUMPUR, April 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today denied reports in two British newspapers of "mass poisoning" of illegal immigrants in Malaysian detention camps.

"I don't quite understand why we should mass poison them wheareas we can repatriate thousands of them and the Indonesian government itself has acknowledged that its citizens would have to be repatriated," he told reporters here.

He was asked to comment about reports in the Observer and The Independent earlier this week that Malaysia had carried out "mass poisoning" of refugees and migrant workers to subdue them prior to their mass deportation last month.

One policeman and eight Indonesian immigrants were killed in riots which broke out in one of the camps at Semenyih near here.

" Why the need to kill people just because they're a problem," said Dr Mahathir, pointing out that the British newspapers were making such allegations as one way to cover up their roles in severely impoverishing Indonesia.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister, said its was such reports which ridiculed other nations that caused wide-spread employment in Indonesia forcing the people to flee their country.

" The real poisoning is done by those who have made Indonesia very poor by depressing the value of the rupiah making 20 million Indonesians jobless now.

" The people employed before are now without work. They're not jobless because of the Indonesian government but because the depressed currency forced many companies into bankruptcy and banks to close down.

"All these were caused by people of the same type as those who wrote such reports," he said after a closed-door meeting with Umno divisional chiefs and leaders of the party's youth and women's movements.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said the foreign media were also trying to disclaim their part in causing Indonesia's economic woes and impoverishing Indonesians who were now too poor to afford food, medicines and milk and had to migrate elsewhere to survive.

" All this started with moves to impoverish Indonesia by depressing its currency," he said.

He also criticised human rights groups for applying pressure on Malaysia to open up detention camps holding illegal immigrants to independent inspections.

" Human rights groups are never satisfied with anything accept if we give five-star hotel accommodation for these people (immigrants)".

" If the human rights group are quite willing to finance, we are quite willing to put them in Shangri-La Hotel but they must pay for it, they can't expect us to pay. These human rights groups... their rights remain up to the point when they do not have to spend their money," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked about pictures of recent riotings in the camps published in some foreign newspapers, Dr Mahathir said these pictures were obtained through corruption.

" I wouldn't like to say it, but somebody obviously got something for it. I think one of the things that we want to eliminate is corruption and corruption takes many form, including these kind of pictures can be obtained through corruption".

Dr Mahathir was also asked about a tendency of the foreign press to undermine the country, the latest being adverse reports on the Commonwealth Games to be held here in September.

" Yes, of course, if they can, they would like to destroy this country with the aid of some Malaysians," he added.

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