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Mahathir-Party

NO PROBLEM IN APPROVING PARTY OF PRO-REFORM GROUP, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government has no problem in approving application by pro-reform group to set up a political party "so long they do everything properly".

"But if they say they want to form a political party (because they want) to shoot and kill people and hold demonstration every day, we will not give the approval," he told reporters after launching the maiden delivery of the Malaysia-made SME MD3-160, ordered by the United States.

He said this when asked whether the government would approve application to set up a political party by "reformasi" (reform) movement supporters.

Dr Mahathir who is also Umno President did not dismiss the possibility of some Umno members joining the new party.

"They are hardly Umno members...they are just passing through. They thought it was profitable to join Umno because they can get contracts and other things," he said.

However, he said the person who gave them contracts was not there any more and therefore it was no use for them to remain in Umno.

"We, ordinary Umno members, join Umno because we care for the country, race and religion," he said, adding that these people were interested only in filling their pockets.

Asked whether this would erode the Barisan Nasional (BN)'s votes, Dr Mahathir said, "Of course, it is going to erode our vote. But it doesn't matter because in election we win some, we lose some."

"They want to set up a political party, its okay, if they dare," he said.

Asked whether the remark was a threat, Dr Mahathir said, "It is not a threat. These people are coward. When in large numbers they are strong and slightly brave but when alone, sitting by themselves, they keep quiet."

Dr Mahathir said it was their right to form a political party.

It was better for them to form a political party and contest in the general election rather than troubling others like traders and taxi drivers whose income was adversely affected each time they held a demonstration, he said.

"In the election, they can contest, they can also curse...I am used to being cursed by them, so it does not make much of a difference to me," he said.

Last week, a supporter of the reformasi movement Malek Hussein, said they would set up a political party in answer to the challenge issued by Dr Mahathir while in Sabah to them to fight out their differences with the government in the general election.

--BERNAMA

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