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Mahathir-Police

POLICE DID NOT PROVOKE DEMONSTRATORS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has dismissed allegations that the police had provoked last Saturday's rioters in Kampung Baru here to turn violent.

He questioned why the demonstrators had brought with them petrol, molotov cocktails, stones and sharp objects.

"Obviously they want to be provoked so that they can have an excuse," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister, was speaking at a news conference after opening the Heli-Asia '98 exhibition at the Mines international exhibition and convention centre in Sungai Besi here.

Wife of former deputy prime minister Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail had alleged that the violent demonstration in Kampung Baru by supporters of her husband Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was a result of police provocation.

On the call by Kampung Baru residents that police should act firmly against the demonstrators, Dr Mahathir said: " +Firmly+ does not mean beating up people."

On Umno Youth acting chief Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein's statement yesterday that the recent spate of anti-government demonstrations in the capital were designed to block Anwar's trial, Dr Mahathir said Hishammuddin might have evidence on this.

"Obviously the demonstration is a duplication of the demonstration in Indonesia. Of course they want it to be more violent as happened in Indonesia.

"They want it to be continuous so that the government will be toppled.

"The most important is that if the government is toppled there will be no trial for the ex-dpm and then of course he will get away scot free," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir said the demonstrations had to be stopped early before people got burnt or killed.

"Already they are beginning to advise people to bring kerosene, petrol and sometimes they talk about molotov cocktail also," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir said these people were being inspired by other countries to change the character and tradition in Malaysia to achieve their objective.

Asked whether there will be a crack down on demonstrators, he said: "I don't know what you mean by cracking down, if it is just to beat them on the head or something like that, we are not intending to do that."

The prime minister said the police have no intention of beating up people.

Asked on his meeting with Menteri Besar here last night, Dr Mahathir said it was just to exchange information on happenings on the ground.

Asked on incursions by Singapore's military aircraft after the ban on their use of Malaysian air space since Sept 18 which Singapore had denied, Dr Mahathir Malaysia would study the matter.

-- BERNAMA

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