

21/07/1998

Stop being parrots of the West, PM tells Opposition

Fadzil Ghazali

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday slammed the Opposition for "parroting" foreigners who are out to destroy the nation instead of working with the Government to help solve the current economic problems.

"They have nothing to harp on, so they (the Opposition) use the economic problems to their advantage," Dr Mahathir said at the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Replying to a question by Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Tanjong) who claimed that nepotism and cronyism in the Government had worsened investors' confidence towards the country, Dr Mahathir said terms such as "denial syndrome", "crony capitalism" and "nepotism" were never used by the Opposition until the foreign Press started using them.

Dr Mahathir said if Malaysia was as bad as it was portrayed by the Opposition, it would have been impossible for Malaysia to develop as much as it did.

"But because he (Lim) practises nepotism, DAP had never been successful," he said, citing the failed Tanjung projects in the last three general elections, as examples.

Dr Mahathir said the fact that the Opposition echoed the foreign media sentiments indicated that they had nothing substantial to put forward as concrete proposals.

"The Opposition in Malaysia lacks quality. It is better to let others take over," he added.

Replying to a supplementary question from Wan Hanafiah Wan Mat Saman (BN-Pokok Sena), Dr Mahathir said the Opposition felt that they would achieve landslide victory in the next general election as a result of the current economic problems.

"They feel that the foreigners who had caused the current problems in the country, would help them win the next election. This means they (the Opposition) are mere agents to the foreigners."

Dr Mahathir said Lim actually practised nepotism as he had already named his son as his successor, adding that: "This is the biggest example of nepotism."

"If they ever take over the administration of the country, in a thousand years probably, we will see a Government which does not allow any criticism and comprises members of the leader's children, grandchildren and all," he said.

* THE Multimedia and Communications Bill 1998 possesses positive impact to ensure success in the country's efforts to develop the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie said the new law acts to integrate all the existing cyber legislations that were passed in Parliament last year.

"It facilitates in making Malaysia a regional centre of telecommunications and to create an informed society," he said when tabling the Bill for second reading at the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Leo Moggie said the Bill is another move to introduce a detailed policy structure, encompassing a convergence of telecommunications, computer and broadcasting.

He noted that this is the basis for the introduction of the Bill which reflected the growth of new communications and multimedia industries in

the country.

The proposed law will also repeal the existing Telecommunications Act 1950 and Broadcasting Act 1988. It also seeks to provide a generic set of regulatory provisions based on generic definitions of market and service activities and services.

Leo Moggie said the scope for the legislation is wide and has a wide usage, adding that it will not require amendments when there is a technological change, unless it is specific.

The proposed legislation takes into consideration global needs and also covers issues related to supervisory and competition among the dominant service providers.

To ensure transparency, clarity and to ensure healthy competition within the industry, Moggie said a tribunal headed by a High Court judge to be assisted by two other specialists in their own fields would be set up.

Consumer protection will also be addressed in the proposed legislation, where a consumer forum can be set up by the supervisory body for consumers and service providers to refer to in case of disputes.

Bernama reports: The country's current economic slowdown has in no way affected the confidence of world software giant Microsoft Corp to continue investing in Malaysia's MSC project.

Deputy Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy said the US-based company, through its local subsidiary, Microsoft Knowledge Capital Centre Sdn Bhd, has expressed willingness to continue investing in the MSC.

"The Government highly welcomes the move by Microsoft and hopes other companies would emulate it," he said replying to a supplementary question from Datuk Hon Choon Kim (BN-Seremban) during question time.

Replying to the original question from Dr G. Leelavathi (BN-Kapar), Chan said so far 154 companies have confirmed participation in the MSC.

Of the number, 65 are local firms, 32 joint ventures between local and foreign parties and 57, fully foreign-owned companies.

Altogether, these companies have committed investment totalling RM2.2 billion during their first year and more than RM3 billion within five years of operations, he said.

The Government projected that 46 more companies would confirm participation in the MSC by year end, he told the Dewan.

This will bring to 200 the total number of companies operating in the MSC, Chan added.

* OPEN burning for religious purposes is allowed, Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment Datuk Law Hieng Ding said.

Small fires by farmers such as for burning away padi husks are also permitted, he told the Dewan Rakyat.

"Burning by farmers involved in shifting cultivation as well as destroying sugarcane leaves by burning are also permitted," he told Abdul Hamid Abdul Rahman (BN-Sungai Benut).

He said up to yesterday, 176 cases of open burning offences had been brought before the courts with the offenders charged under the Environment Quality Act 1974. Law hoped such legal action will serve as a lesson to others not to engage in open burning.

He said the ministry's enforcement officers will step up operation to ensure that individuals and companies do not engage in indiscriminate open burning activities.

Replying to Zainal Abidin Osman (BN-Mersing), Law said Sarawak and Sabah are among the states expected to be affected by the La Nina phenomenon at the end of this year when there will be heavy rain and floods.

The ministry had advised the two states as well as other states in the Peninsula to be prepared for this, he added.

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