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Mahathir-Anwar

ANWAR IBRAHIM DID NOT DECLARE HIS ASSETS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

By: Wan A.Hulaimi

LONDON, Oct 2 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad Friday said his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, was the only member of his Cabinet who did not declare his assets when in office.

Dr Mahathir said all Cabinet ministers had to declare their assets to him.

"Maybe he thought because he was the deputy prime minister, he did not have to do so," Dr Mahathir speculated when asked about transparency in politics and why Malaysian politicians do not have to declare their assets, during a meeting with Malaysians, at the Malaysia Hall, here.

Anwar was sacked as deputy prime minister and finance minister on Sept 2, last year and expelled from Umno the following day.

Anwar, who is serving a six-year jail term for corruption, is currently on trial on sodomy charges.

When asked if the recent actions taken against business people who were regarded as close associates of Anwar was not "selective prosecution", Dr Mahathir replied that Anwar had always said that he had no cronies of his own because he (Anwar) was fair to everybody.

"So how can we say that there are people who were close to him?"

"The fact is this...these people were actually his cronies, and during the time when he (Anwar) was in the government, these people were protected. Now that he is not in government, they are no longer protected, and we have discovered that they have been doing quite a lot of things," said the prime minister.

Dr Mahathir said it would "be wrong for us not to prosecute because to do so would expose us to accusations of selective prosecution".

"Either we stick to the law or we don't," he said.

He reminded the audience that the judiciary in Malaysia was a fair one because in the past a party of the government (Umno) had been declared illegal and a member of the Cabinet had been convicted for murder.

"You cannot accuse the legal process in Malaysia as being selective," he said.

Dr Mahathir also spoke about the coming general election and students' involvement in politics.

The prime minister said foreign powers were waiting for his government to be voted out because the opposition would be more compliant to their dictates.

"Malaysia does not have to depend on anybody," he said.

It was for this reason that the country preferred to look for her own solutions and not to seek the help of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the economic crisis, Dr Mahathir said.

On students' involvement in politics, he said although the government did send people to address them on things such as the Multimedia Super Corridor, the government did not want them to involve themselves directly in politics.

Dr Mahathir recalled an incident in the past when he was "attacked" in the sermon during Friday prayers at the Malaysia Hall.

"I stopped coming (here). I came here to pray and not to listen to sermons like that," he said.

He told the Malaysian students who were also in the audience that they had a duty to study and not to take part in riots or in party politics.

Taking the cue from another questioner who spoke about the "hidden

agenda" of foreign campaigners and governments, Dr Mahathir said that there were two "aspirins" that they (foreigners) like to offer to people -- human rights and democracy.

Citing the recent detention of a foreign journalist in Malaysia for contempt of court, he said that the West was upset because one Western journalist was imprisoned.

"But they are not concerned about the plight of people in Iraq, for instance, where children are dying and deprived of food because one person, the president, was a hated man," Dr Mahathir said.

He asked how they (foreigners) could talk about democracy when one vote from one of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council could overrule the wishes of more than a hundred other members of the UN.

The prime minister said Malaysia wanted to help the oppressed everywhere, in Bosnia, Kosovo or Somalia "because we are better off than them".

He said that funds collected by Malaysians for the Kosovars had not been fully disbursed because they wanted to be sure that the money goes to the people and not be diverted elsewhere.

After addressing the Malaysia Hall audience, Dr Mahathir left for Zimbabwe to attend the South African International Dialogue.

Earlier here, Dr Mahathir performed Friday prayers. It was also attended by the Sultan of Brunei.

-- BERNAMA

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