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Mahathir-Perwaja

DECISIONS ON PERWAJA STEEL MADE COLLECTIVELY, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, July 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that decisions on Perwaja Steel Sdn Bhd were made collectively by the federal government.

Former Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was also involved, he said.

"He can bring it to court if he wants to," he said in reference to a police report lodged by Anwar who claims that Perwaja had suffered losses of RM2,985 million and mentions Dr Mahathir's name in the report.

"He cannot say that although I am in the government, but I disagree. If he disagreed, he must protest," he told a news conference after opening the Gerakan annual delegates meeting, here.

Dr Mahathir said that similarly in the case of Putrajaya and the Prime Minister's residence, any money spent on developing these projects must be okayed by the finance minister.

"Also, all government cabinet papers which have financial involvement must go through the ministry and okayed by Anwar," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Ministry of Finance, under Anwar then, never protested against Putrajaya, never mentioned that it was building a "mahligai" (palace) and never even protested against the Bakun hydroelectric dam project.

He went along supporting the government when he was in the government, he said.

"If that mahligai is built, it was built because he allowed that money to be spent...so he is guilty," the prime minister said.

Asked on the current stock market performance, Dr Mahathir said he was not concerned because it was healthy for the market to have its ups and downs.

On factors to be considered before dissolving parliament, he said there were many things that could be considered "but the most important thing is that we want to ensure absolute victory. We can win even now but we want absolute (victory)".

Dr Mahathir said the BN wants a big majority to ensure that the country would continue to have a strong and stable government and not because it wants to change the constitution.

"If it is a simple or small majority, there is always a threat to the government. Even if a few people gets disaffected they can move over and then the government goes down...we don't want that," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was happy with the level of support received by the government from the people right now.

On some people said to be holding back, he said it was because they were confused. "These people thought that Anwar is being badly treated by me while some are playing on religious issues," he said.

On concerns that some people were not being forward-looking, Dr Mahathir said the PAS strategy was to influence them since they were young, from the kindergarten, to the university and overseas.

Many of those studying overseas, he said, were involved in the Islamic Revolutionary Council, for example, and were being instilled with "anti-establishment" spirit.

He said that even though they obtained government assistance, upon their return to the country, they were thinking of how to resist the establishment.

"These people usually support PAS and when questioned why they did that, they cannot answer," he said.

On perception that students had been alienated from the leaders of the government, Dr Mahathir said the government do not want to disturb the students and want them to concentrate on their studies, especially the Bumiputeras.

"But now it seems that if we don't get in contact with them, the opposition will use this opportunity to subvert them. Now, I find they hate the government for no reason. They get scholarships from the government, jobs in the government and every help from the government but they are told not to be grateful to the government, to hate the government. We must correct them," he said.

On suggestions that the Universities and University Colleges Act be reviewed, the prime minister said the act was meant for the students' good as it would stop people from disturbing them and to stop them from getting involved in "brainless activities".

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