

06/11/1999

Dr M launches Umno drive to combat lies

THE lies and slander spread by the Opposition have reached an extent where many people now cannot differentiate between what is right and what is wrong, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"Pas, Keadilan, the DAP throw slander until the rakyat are confused, to a dangerous level where the rakyat feel that the bad is the truth and the good is a lie.

"That is why we have to fight slander and lies as when the rakyat are confused, they will make unwise decisions," Dr Mahathir said at the launching of a nationwide campaign by Umno to combat lies and slander by the Opposition at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

The Prime Minister explained that labelling is the most effective method used by the Opposition to spread slander and lies.

Dr Mahathir said he has been labelled by the Opposition as a dictator, "Maha Zalim" (Great Oppressor) and "Maha Firaun" (Great Pharaoh), which led some people to perceive what he said or did based on the labels. He said people see Pas as an Islamic party based on its label and brand, despite the fact that some things they do and say are against Islam. He added that the Umno information committee and its officers need to understand this problem and try to convince the rakyat that "what we do is right and the Opposition is wrong".

"The fact that we have to face is that the attacks on us are based on slander, and the good deeds we do for religion and country are ignored by some of the rakyat," he said.

Dr Mahathir acknowledged that it is not easy to counter the slanders and lies created by the Opposition and former deputy prime minister and Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

However, the Prime Minister added, it can be done if Umno repeatedly comes out with evidence to counter the lies and slanderous statements.

Dr Mahathir spoke at length on Anwar's actions from 1974 until the former deputy prime minister was sacked in 1998 and while in jail as examples of planned and well-strategised lies.

Dr Mahathir said Anwar is now using the same approach he did when he incited students to riot in their protests against the Government in 1974.

"His approach is the same, he lies and incites the rakyat. They will resort to rioting, they will suffer because of the riots and he will be the hero.

"Soon, his supporters will see that he is getting sicker but the Government will insist on the continuation of his trial and they will get angry," he said, referring to Anwar's latest claim of health problems.

Dr Mahathir said Anwar now complains of having headaches after his allegation of being poisoned with arsenic was proven false.

"Anwar's strategy is very good and systematic. We found that it is hard to counter his attacks ... he will continue to lie," he said, adding that the Umno information committee has to work out ways to show the people that Anwar is not the person that he tries to portray.

Dr Mahathir, however, said it is not hard to counter lies made by Pas as they can be easily proven wrong.

(END)