

05 JUL 1999

Mahathir-MAPEN

DR MAHATHIR SLAMS OPPOSITION FOR REFUSING TO JOIN MAPEN II

KUALA LUMPUR, July 5 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight criticised opposition parties that refused to join the Economic Consultative Council (MAPEN II), saying they have no sense of responsibility.

The Prime Minister said they did not want to be bound by whatever decisions to be made by the council so that as "parties good for criticising" they would be free to hit out at the decisions.

"So this is the style of the opposition, no sense of responsibility at all," Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, told reporters after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting here.

He said when the government tried to consult opposition parties, they spurned its gesture, but when the government did not approach them they would blame the government for not consulting the opposition.

These opposition parties would then simply accuse the present government of being no good allegedly for not consulting them, but the fact was that they refused to join in discussions when invited to, he said.

"They have elements of some fear," he said.

Asked to comment on opposition claims that the government never considered its views, Dr Mahathir said: "Who says we never did? (There are) many views that we have accepted...it's only that they want to claim it is their idea when we do something...that's different, it's politics."

The opposition DAP, PAS, Keadilan and Parti Rakyat Malaysia were reported to have decided, at a meeting on Thursday, to stay away from MAPEN II.

They contended that the invitation to join the council was a government ploy to show it was open and willing to discuss with the opposition.

Dr Mahathir said the Supreme Council also decided that it was important for the federal and state governments and housing developers to speed up the construction of low-cost houses, especially the allocation for Bumiputeras.

Land acquisition for this purpose should be done speedily, he said.

He said the Council also reviewed the current political situation in the country and felt that efforts were still needed to explain matters to Umno members and supporters.

This will be done by Umno Youth, Wanita Umno, Supreme Council members, Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers.

Before the meeting, Dr Mahathir handed over more than RM21,000 to the Kosovo Action Fund. The money, raised at the recent Umno General Assembly, was received by a TV3 representative.

-- BERNAMA

MNY YBY