

19 JUN 1999

Mahathir-Contempt

DR MAHATHIR BELIEVES HE IS NOT IN CONTEMPT OF COURT

KUALA LUMPUR, June 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad believes that he is not in contempt of court when he talked about his former deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in his presidential address at the Umno general assembly.

The Prime Minister said what he said about Anwar yesterday was based on his own experience and not on Anwar's sodomy case which is proceeding in court.

"I respect the court but I am talking about myself, about my own experience. Am I not allowed to say anything about my own experience? That I talked to Anwar, that this is what he said....that is what I am telling. I'm not allowed to say that?," he said.

Speaking at a press conference at the end of the third day of the Umno general assembly, he said there was already one case filed against him for alleged contempt and "now as a Prime Minister I must not say anything.?"

"When the court judge placed a gag (order), they opposed because it was against freedom of speech. Yet when I speak I am told you must shut up, otherwise we'll sue you for contempt," he said.

"Whereas, they write letters from the jail, they write letters from the court, they distribute things, they put things in the Internet and say nasty things about me and the government, but I must not say anything because if I do, it is contempt of court," he added.

Dr Mahathir said, "So if the court case dragged on for five years, I will not be able to campaign even for the election."

"So the only way I can shut up anybody against me is to have a case in court and drag it on for years so nobody can say anything about me....and these people talk about freedom of the press and freedom of speech," he added.

On whether, he himself will take legal action on the things said about him, he said he believed in the freedom of the press and freedom of speech.

--BERNAMA

SHO ZKS AAM