

25/07/1999

Dr Mahathir: Check Opposition allegations

Patvinder Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged Malaysians to analyse carefully Opposition allegations that the Government did not care for the public, ruled with an iron fist and curtailed free speech.

At the same time, the Prime Minister said, the Government was not asking Malaysians to believe everything it said.

"Check it carefully first," he said at the opening of the 28th Gerakan annual delegates' conference.

The Prime Minister outlined several questions that should be examined by the people.

"Is it true that the Government does not care for the people," Dr Mahathir asked, citing the first of the posers.

Expanding on the issue, Dr Mahathir asked:

"Did the Government not help in reducing toll rates, taxes and other costs? Did the BN Government not control inflation until the cost of living in Malaysia is only one-third that of countries of equal standing in the world?

"Has not the BN Government guarded the people's security that they can go anywhere without being fearful for their safety?

"Has not the Malaysian Government overcome the attack on the national economy by foreign currency speculators?"

Other issues to be scrutinised included whether the BN Government had squandered the country's wealth, was wasteful and irresponsible.

Dr Mahathir said up to now the country had defended itself from foreigners and many people had said that what happened in other countries could not occur here.

"We cannot be sure that it will not happen. If we ignore it and the people take it lightly there is a possibility of chaos happening in our country."

The Prime Minister said Malaysians were fortunate and that there were many foreigners who applied to be Malaysian citizens or to reside here.

"Many Malaysians who had moved to other countries have also returned. Surely foreigners want to live here because Malaysia is better than their country," he said in his speech.

Dr Mahathir said it would be a tragedy if Malaysians themselves did not value what they had.

He added that it would be a greater tragedy if the people hated the Government without cause and tried to cause its downfall.

Dr Mahathir said the people should not view the Government's warning as a political tactic and that if they let themselves be influenced by opposition parties, the misfortunes that had befallen other countries could hit Malaysia.

He also recounted the Government's efforts in overcoming the economic crisis and said that now the countries' detractors had to retract their criticism.

The critics had also made accusations that the country's judicial system was not impartial and they had tarnished it among foreigners, he said.

He added that it was not taken into consideration that only in Malaysia did a court declare a ruling party unlawful, referring to when Umno was ruled unlawful in 1987 and had to be re-registered.

Cabinet ministers, Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers had also been taken to court, he said.

Dr Mahathir said as the general election drew closer, many baseless accusations would be hurled at the Government and the purpose of opposition parties was to incite hatred and anger against the Government.

Also at the function were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, BN secretary-general Datuk Seri Mohamed Rahmat, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and other BN component party leaders.

(END)