

16 NOV 1999

Mahathir-Allegations

DR M: I WILL NOT SHIRK MY RESPONSIBILITIES DESPITE PERSONAL ATTACKS

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he will not shirk his responsibilities to the country just because the Opposition was waging personal attacks against him.

"Yes, I can sulk. I can run away from reality but if I do that, it means I'm irresponsible, I value myself more or being personal than (my) duties.

"I have duties (to perform). As long as I'm entrusted with the responsibilities to carry out my tasks, I will continue doing so. Just because people accuse me, I feel disappointed, I feel people don't appreciate me and so I sulk and I don't work, this to me is an irresponsible attitude," he said referring to the Opposition labelling him as "Maha Firaun" (Great Pharaoh) and "Maha Zalim" (Great Oppressor).

The Prime Minister was speaking in a special interview with TV3 tonight. Transcript of the interview was released to Bernama by the Prime Minister's Office.

Saying that he was aware of the name-calling, Dr Mahathir said: "We are all influenced by labels and brands. When the brand is good although the products are of inferior quality, we accept them as of good quality.

"If the brand is not good but the products are of quality, we still say no quality. Hence, what is being done to me is to label me with a brand so that whatever good I do, it will look bad," he said.

Dr Mahathir recalled that he was once labelled as an "ultra" by certain people even for the moderate things he did.

The Prime Minister said he was being labelled as a pharaoh and an oppressor although there was no proof of him being cruel to anyone and everything was being done according to the law.

"But by giving such labels, it will arouse hatred against me and whatever I say will not be accepted. This is a political motive to topple me. That's all," he said.

Dr Mahathir also commented on the existence of a cassette tape which the Opposition claimed was proof that he was anti-ulama.

"I'm aware of the tape. Contents of the tape are excerpts of my speech at the closing of a national-level religious function. In my speech, I explained who actually can be recognised as an ulama," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he had explained that not anybody can be accepted as an ulama, more so the status of an ulama was so high to the extent of being considered as the heir of Prophet Muhammad.

"I accept ulamas but not all who claim to be one," he said.

According to him, many people claiming to be ulamas actually have other interests besides religion such as political motives to the extent of making religious interpretations contrary to Islamic teachings.

Dr Mahathir said he explained ulamas were people like Imam Syafie, Imam Ghazali and others.

"In this country also there are people who are really knowledgeable in Islam without any vested interests," he said.

Since it was a closed-door meeting, any tape recording cannot be given to others and it is clear "the person who stole the tape" had committed a crime prohibited by Islam.

"In Islam, we know the penalty is very heavy for people who steal. But it will be heavier if after stealing, they cut off many sentences, many of my words and inter-spere with their comments.

"By doing so, what I've said becomes distorted. I did not say I'm anti-ulama or I don't accept ulamas but they purposely cut out certain words in the tape recording so that people will be very angry when they listen to it," he said.

Dr Mahathir said people who use religion for political interests were dangerous because Islamic teachings conveyed by them were inaccurate according to the Holy Quran, hadis (sayings of Prophet Muhammad) and holy books.

He cited an example of an opposition party leader who was prepared to say that even God uttered profanities just to defend the novel of an author who is also the party's life member.

"Yes, I admit the God indeed condemned Abu Lahab and others. But condemning and uttering profanities are different. That's why, I feel our faith will be threatened if we do not keep to the true teachings of Islam," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia needed ulamas with no vested interests, genuinely honest in interpreting Islamic teachings and teach what was actually preached by Islam.

The Prime Minister also refuted claims that he was a secular leader who was not committed to propagate Islamic teachings.

Asked what form of an Islamic country he proposed to create, Dr Mahathir said: " If we want to establish an Islamic nation, it is not by the number of mosques or our clothings, but with our abilities.

"Without forgetting the teachings of Islam, religious obligations, fardu ain, we also cannot ignore the needs and security of Muslims and their abilities to defend themselves," he added.

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