

30 AUG 1999

Mahathir-War

MAHATHIR PREPARED TO FIGHT PARTIES THAT MAKE USE OF ISLAM

ALOR SETAR, Aug 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is prepared to go to war with parties in the country that use Islam for their political ends.

The prime minister, in an apparent reference to PAS, said he was not prepared to let certain parties use the religion to fish for votes to set up the government.

"They must not be given success (in the general election). If I have to go to war (with them), I will do it.

"The aim is to defend our sacred religion because Islam's followers in the country are Malays," he said at a meeting with imams and mosque officials in Kedah at Wisma Darul Aman, here.

Present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Dr Abdul Hamid Othman.

Dr Mahathir said that as long as he was Malaysia's leader, he was responsible for defending the religion and race and for getting rid of elements that could split the Malays.

Dr Mahathir became emotional when he related an incident he had witnessed during the Japanese occupation in which a Japanese soldier kicked an old Malay man for not getting off his bicycle when the Japanese anthem was played.

Overcome by emotion, he was silent for a few minutes after relating the incident. He then drank the water placed in front of him, apparently to calm himself.

The 3,000-strong crowd clapped and Dr Mahathir continued with his speech.

He took an hour to explain the struggle for independence and the challenges faced in defending that independence.

He said it was not impossible for the country to be re-colonised, after achieving independence for 42 years.

However, this time, the colonisation was not by sending troops to conquer a country but through control of a country's economy, he said.

He said there were big foreign companies that had offered to buy over Proton.

They belittled Malaysians' capability to run the industry by saying that the automobile industry needed a huge expenditure and that they could offer lower prices for the car.

"If they take over Proton and other big companies, they can easily control our economy at the expense of our citizens who will no longer have power to determine the fate of the country's economy.

"Can they offer a cheap car when their objective is profit and when they have never given a thought to the fate of Malaysians?" he said.

He said the government decided not to seek aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) because it did not want jeopardise the interests of the country, especially that of the Malays.

He said there was still many countries in the grip of economic colonisation although they had gained independence from their conquerors.

"We must be thankful because we can still celebrate the 42nd anniversary of our independence tomorrow and live in peace," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MZM JK