

21 MAY 1999

Mahathir-Opposition

OPPOSITION TEND TO HOLD NEGATIVE PERCEPTION OF GOVERNMENT

KOTA TINGGI, May 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad took opposition parties to task for their tendency to have a negative perception of the government to the extent that every move taken was considered to have a political motive.

"There was nothing that was considered good by the opposition. Everything was perceived negatively," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked to comment on the allegation by the opposition that the recent government move to raise the salary of 120,000 "DG6" teachers was a political gimmick ahead of the general election.

"That decision was made a long time ago and we have just now implemented it," he told a press conference after a meet the people session at the Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Felda Pengeli Timur near here today.

He said Umno's move to lodge police reports on the baseless accusations levelled against Umno leaders and the government was not aimed at curbing the voice of the opposition.

He said Umno had to take such action it had been defamed by the opposition.

"We need to expose their tactic and the best way is to lodge police reports," he said.

Dr Mahathir, the Umno president, said Umno has recordings of the wild accusations levelled against it.

Asked about the possibility of the opposition turning the minor Cabinet reshuffle announced yesterday into a political issue, the Prime Minister said the opposition has the tendency to turn anything into a political issue.

"Even if there is nothing, they can turn it into an issue," he said.

Dr Mahathir said even his pilgrimage to Mecca was turned into a political issue by an opposition party.

"I was unwell and they said I was dead. I performed the haj and they said I did not, that I fainted in front of the Kaabah," he said.

Asked about a further minor reshuffle involving some Menteri Besar, Dr Mahathir said, "None...that's all until the election".

"We are very open. When we need to make a change, we do it."

He said the reshuffle was not because those involved were inefficient but that he needed to make changes when necessary.

On his meeting with Indonesian President B.J. Habibie in Batam yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the meeting gave him the opportunity to elaborate on certain matters.

He said the meeting did touch on the entry of illegal immigrants from Indonesia into Malaysia but that the problem could be overcome by both sides.

-- BERNAMA
ZKS MKO THG