

21/07/1999

Opposition unhappy over Government's move

THE Opposition yesterday voiced disapproval of the Government's move to seek an additional allocation of RM556 million for operating expenditure, claiming the money would be used to strengthen the government machinery for the coming election.

Opposition leader and MP for Tanjong Lim Kit Siang claimed the allocation was simply a clever plan to cover itself while strengthening its election machinery to ensure the Barisan Nasional stayed in power.

Lim added the Government belonged to the people and it was not the personal property of the Barisan Nasional.

"This is a basic tenet of governance and democratic practice," he said referring to Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob's recent statement that his Ministry's facilities would not be made available to the Opposition during the election.

"What is even more shocking is that the Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) defended the statement. Let me remind the Prime Minister that democracy is more than going through the motions of balloting.

"It entails giving the people a free choice between different visions of the nation's struggles - a free choice based on all of the facts," he said.

The practice of the Government of constantly seeking additional allocations reflected on its competence to plan ahead prudently and to budget for the year ahead.

"The practice shows at best an inability to manage resources but at worst an attempt to deliberately underprovide for expenditure at the beginning of the budget cycle thereby sending misleading signals to markets and the people,

"It would not be inappropriate to conclude that the Government is more interested in painting a rosy picture of the nation's finances than in managing them in a sound, intelligent and prudent manner."

He was debating the Supplementary Supply (1999) Bill 1999 which seeks an additional allocation of RM556,752,300 for management purposes.

Lim Hock Seng (DAP-Bagan) claimed the allocation would be used by the ruling government to make preparations for the coming election.

Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong) said the Government's inability to implement the earlier RM17 billion allocation effectively would jeopardise national productivity.

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