

23/07/1999

PM: My duty to society comes before friendship

KOTA BARU, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight if he had to choose once again between helping a friend and carrying out his responsibility to society, he would choose the latter.

The Prime Minister said he had no choice even though it involved a friend because his responsibility was to society.

In a vague reference to his decision to sack Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, he said he had to decide whether to protect a friend or society which had placed its trust in him.

"And I had to choose society, and a friend became the enemy. I have to accept this," said Dr Mahathir without mentioning Anwar's name throughout his speech.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a dinner held here tonight in conjunction with his one-and-a-half-day visit to Kelantan.

The Prime Minister said leaders were responsible to make decisions and provide guidelines for their followers.

He said this could be quite a difficult task because leaders who were at the top could not pass the buck to others but had to make their own decisions.

"If the decision is good the leader will be praised but when it is considered wrong he will be criticised."

Dr Mahathir said therefore those who became leaders must be willing to accept criticism.

He said a leader on top could also be lonely as he would not be able to share his responsibility in decision making with others.

"There are times when his decision is not appreciated or accepted by others.

"I am aware of the loneliness at the top."

He said there were times a leader had to make decisions that he himself was not comfortable with.

"When a friend makes mistakes, for example, a leader has to choose between helping a friend and doing the right thing."

Later, during a dialogue session, one of those present expressed his hope that the "second get-together" between Dr Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh would last forever.

To this, Dr Mahathir said as much as he would like it to last himself, he could not give any assurance.

(END)