

21 OCT 1999

Mahathir-Challenge

PM DARES INCITING TEACHERS TO STATE STAND OPENLY

JITRA, Oct 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today challenged teachers who incite students against the government to come to the open and state their stand.

"I challenge them to come before me and repeat what they told the students," he said when performing ground-breaking for four new schools in Kedah simultaneously here.

Dr Mahathir said a handful of teachers have not been imparting knowledge to students but were instead preoccupied with instigating them to go against the government and national leaders.

"They accuse the government of cruelty and that certain leaders are only enriching themselves...they (the teachers concerned) betray the pursuit of knowledge and are traitors to their race and country.

"In all sincerity, I dare them to appear before me and declare that they are the ones who incite the students...but from what I know, they are just cowards," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the allegations were baseless, more so when the world itself recognised Malaysia as being among the more advanced among developing countries.

"If the government is oppressive and the leaders are corrupt, how can the country possibly prosper. It'll obviously be wrecked. But look at what we have provided for the people, the hospitals, schools, roads and the like," he said.

The prime minister said the teachers' instigation was damaging in that the students could no longer be bothered about pursuing knowledge and only cared about politics instead.

"Even those keen in studying are not spared by the inciting teachers leaving Malay students straggling behind their peers from the other communities whereas in terms of numbers we are superior," he said.

The prime minister said it was pointless for the government to provide schooling facilities if teachers on government payroll were not thankful and incited their students against it instead.

Dr Mahathir also said the government would be spending more on development projects that directly benefited the people despite certain quarters accusing it of cronyism when Malay contractors were awarded the projects.

"What we do is to keep Malay contractors abreast with fellow contractors from the other communities in terms of capabilities and this is in line with the New Economic Policy," he said.

The normally undercapitalised and heavily debt-ridden Malay contractors nonetheless deserved to be awarded specific projects which would indirectly benefit workers and suppliers, he said.

The government did not wish to see a recurrence of what former finance minister (Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim) did by kow-towing to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) demand that government expenditure be cut by 20 per cent, he said.

"The government sets aside 80 per cent of its operating expenditure for emoluments and 20 per cent for infrastructural projects for the people.

"To cut expenditure by 20 per cent means no project can be implemented and this is to the detriment of contractors, the Malay ones in particular, workers and suppliers," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir said neither could the government slash down civil

servants' emoluments nor would it be wise to do so because this could only impede economic recovery.

"The (Anwar's) decision (to cut down expenditure) was not even discussed in the Cabinet...it's his (Anwar's) unilateral decision," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir said he was saddened that these quarters had misinformed outsiders about cronyism to provoke them in criticising the government.

"Let them criticise...we'll continue with our efforts to improve the lot of the people. We're not out to win praise from foreigners but let our people live in misery," the prime minister said.

The four proposed secondary schools would cost a total of RM36.9 million and are part of 40 to be erected nation-wide with an allocation totalling RM1 billion.

The Kedah chapter of the Malaysian Malay Chamber of Commerce would build the schools in Paya Kemunting, Pinang Tunggul, Sungai Lalang and Sungai Pasir Kecil.

Kedah Menteri Besar Kedah Tan Sri Sanusi Junid and state Malay Chamber of Commerce president Baharuddin Kasim were also present.

-- BERNAMA

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