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Mahathir-PAS

PM QUESTIONS SINCERITY OF PAS' COOPERATION WITH OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 25 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that PAS' preparedness to amend its constitution to drop its objective in setting up an Islamic state, if there was one, will prove whether the party is sincere in its pact with the other opposition parties.

He said that the Barisan Nasional (BN) would compare PAS' constitution with the agreement reached through the manifesto of the opposition parties, known as the Alternative Front, announced yesterday.

"What are stated in its constitution...PAS says it is struggling for an Islamic state. If it is stated so in the constitution, we would like to know whether the party will make an amendment to drop its intention to set up an Islamic state.

"If they are prepared to do so, then we can tell they have no intention of cheating the DAP," he told reporters after chairing the two-hour BN Supreme Council meeting, here.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman and Umno president, was asked to comment on the 45-page manifesto of the Alternative Front comprising PAS, DAP, Keadilan and PRM, which makes no mention of the setting up of an Islamic state claimed by PAS to be its struggle.

"It is only agreement in the manifesto...looks like they are saying it's all right, we'll agree, but when we win, we'll do something else," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the opposition was free to make all sorts of promises through the manifesto as they knew they need not be fulfilled.

"They can even promise heaven to people because they know they are going to lose and need not fulfil their promises.

"That is why they promise minimum wages for estate workers and other things but it's the employers who will be paying. Whether or not the employers agree, they did not ask. They only make promises," he said.

Commenting on the opposition pact to table a shadow 2000 Budget on Wednesday, Dr Mahathir said the government would like to know what factors were taken into account by the opposition.

"They can plan their Budget for the country. But we would like to know from where they are going to get the money," he said.

According to the prime minister, the government prepares the Budget after fully taking into account the country's financial resources and through the Budget, allocations were made for the various sectors.

"But I would like to know what are the government's estimated earnings projected by the opposition parties and what are their basis in making the government's estimated earnings for the year 2000," he said.

Dr Mahathir was also asked on the proposal contained in the opposition's manifesto entitled "Towards A Just Malaysia" limiting the term of the prime minister, menteri besar and chief minister to only two terms.

"Indeed...Karpal Singh should also serve as an elected representative for only one term," he said.

Commenting on a challenge by DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang that the BN join the Alternative Front "to ensure the country's 10th election is the cleanest in history", the prime minister said that the BN was different from the Alternative Front as it was set up to run the country.

Dr Mahathir further said in jest: "Usually, the smaller in size enters the bigger one...for the bigger to enter the smaller one, it's rather difficult".

He said that the opposition pact was set up when an election approaches, unlike the BN which was set up 25 years ago.

Commenting on the proposal by the opposition for the campaign period be extended, Dr Mahathir said: "Two years are not enough? They have been campaigning since they lost in 1995. The campaigning never cease".

According to him, the opposition also incited students, undergraduates and even pre-schoolers.

"How long more do they want...if they want more than five years, it is all right. We can postpone the election for 10 years, they can campaign all they want," he said cynically.

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