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Mahathir-Scrutiny

SCRUTINISE OPPOSITION'S ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, July 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on the people to scrutinise all allegations by the opposition against the government like charges that the Barisan Nasional (BN) government is a dictatorship which curtails the freedom of opposition parties.

"We are not asking the people to believe everything the government says. Make a thorough check first, but make the same scrutiny on allegations by the opposition parties against the government.

"Is it true that the BN government doesn't care for the welfare of the people; is the BN government wasting government funds, extravagant and irresponsible; and is the government incapable of dealing with the attacks on nation's economy by foreign rogue speculators," he said when opening the 28th Gerakan delegates conference, here.

Dr Mahathir said that the opposition parties never take into account the people's well-being and were prepared to make promises they could not possibly keep like creating a "Malaysian Malaysia", an Islamic state, to provide pension payments to all citizens, to auction Putrajaya and many other promises.

"Such promises by themselves show that they believe they cannot win (in the election), will not be forming a government to meet their promises. They make promises only to obtain extra votes for their parties and may be, win several more seats," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysians had certainly been lucky and it would be most unfortunate if they harbour hatred towards the government without any reason and try to topple the government.

He said that the government never felt threatened over attempts by opposition parties in forming a pact like the BN coalition but was concerned over the obvious support for them by foreigners including super power leaders.

The prime minister said that Malaysia had so far been able to defend itself from foreign manipulation while many others stated that what had happened in other countries would not happen in Malaysia.

"But we cannot be certain that they will not happen. If the people were to take them lightly, there is a possibility that trouble will break out in the country. The people must not believe that our reminders are just political gimmicks.

"If they were to allow themselves to be influenced by the opposition, disaster which occurred in other countries will also strike us," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that even though many critics were beginning to change their views following Malaysia's success in reviving its economy, some groups of foreigners still refused to accept the fact that the country was recovering and in fact managed to maintain harmony and unity in its multi-racial society.

He said what makes it sad was that some Malaysians themselves were very fond of adopting the ways of the foreigners and possessed a colonial mentality by believing that only outsiders were capable and all their orders should be obeyed.

"They also make allegations that the country's judicial system is not independent and make criticisms to foreigners. They fail to take into account that only a court in Malaysia has ruled that a government party was unlawful," he said, referring to Umno being declared unlawful in 1987.

Dr Mahathir said that if it was indeed true that the government could direct judges, prosecutors or the attorney-general to do anything, surely government leaders and friends of the party leadership would not be dragged to court or convicted.

"But the same actions were taken against government members and friends of the nation's leaders like prosecution and conviction on others. We know it happened that when a leader of an opposition party was found guilty, the sentence imposed on him was reduced so that he will not lose his parliamentary seat," he said.

Elaborating on the country's present economic situation, Dr Mahathir said that it was favourable and would again achieve the pre-crisis growth rate.

He said that critics had to withdraw their condemnation because Malaysia's capital control measures had been recognised.

"They have to swallow their own words," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the country swam against the current when it was convinced that recovery measures advocated by outsiders would only worsen the situation.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, was met on arrival at the Gerakan headquarters at Menara PGRM by Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik and other leaders of the party.

Among those present at the function were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, BN secretary-general Datuk Seri Mohamed Rahmat, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and BN component party leaders including MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.

The conference is attended by some 1,700 delegates who will elect a deputy president of the party and members of the party's central committee for the 1999/2002 term.

The party's Youth and Wanita movements held their delegates' conferences yesterday.

-- BERNAMA

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