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Mahathir-Demonstrations

STREET DEMONSTRATIONS HURTING BUSINESSES, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

By: Amin Husaini Harun

NEW YORK, Sept 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said that the people are now fed up with street demonstrations as such agitations are hurting petty businesses and small traders.

He said he was at one time worried about the situation but now the people themselves were fed up with them as it was they who get hurt financially.

In comments made during a pre-recorded talk show aired on television channel 13 here Monday night, he believed the recent demonstrations were arranged by his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is serving a six-year jail sentence for corruption.

To a question by Charlie Rose of the Public Broadcasting System, he said Anwar had led student demonstrations against a purported child starvation case in 1974, which was eventually found to be not true.

"In Malaysia, it is not possible for anybody to die of starvation. The country is such that if you find a neighbour dying of starvation, the people will provide food for him," he said.

To another question as to whether the government was against dissenting voices, Dr Mahathir said that attacks against the government were found in almost all the vernacular papers.

"While the English language papers are rather balanced in their reports and are appreciative of things that should be appreciated, the vernacular papers at times attack the government for no valid reasons. We have not stopped them," he said.

He said even political parties distributed their political papers to the public without being stopped by the government.

On the jailing of Canadian journalist Murray Hiebert for contempt of court, the prime minister said the government had nothing to do with it as it was a matter between the court and the journalist.

The journalist was brought before the court for contempt and Malaysia does not have any provision that exempted journalists from the laws of the country.

"You break the law, you have to face the consequences like anybody else. Everybody is equal in the eyes of the law including the King himself," he said.

On Malaysia's relationship with the US, the prime minister said he found most Americans confused about Malaysia such as the way they like to associate Malaysia with its neighbours, so much so that they thought whatever happened to countries like Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, it would also involve Malaysia.

He said Americans should allow newly independent countries to work out their democracy and not impose their form of democracy upon them.

-- BERNAMA

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