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Assemblyman-reaction

DR MAHATHIR AND OTHER LEADERS SHOCKED BY SHOOTING

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 4 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed sadness and shock over the killing of Lunas state assemblyman Dr Joe Fernandez, saying that it is not the norm in Malaysia to shoot elected representatives.

"During the emergency, we had such incidents," the prime minister said when asked about the incident by reporters in Langkawi.

"I did not expect such a thing to happen now," he said.

He expressed his condolences to Fernandez's family and said the incident would be investigated.

Dr Fernandez, 54, the Kedah MIC deputy chairman, died at the Bukit Mertajam Specialist Hospital about 30 minutes after he was shot in the head and body in his car at the Jalan Maju-jalan Harapan junction in Bukit Mertajam at 2.30pm today.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, who just arrived in Rome to attend the World Congress on Intelligent Transport System, said he was shocked by the news.

He described the shooting as the murder of an innocent and hardworking elected representative who had served the people well.

"His untimely death is a blow to the MIC's effort to build the second line of leaders as he was an upcoming popular politician...he also came out tops at all party elections he contested," Samy Vellu said when contacted from here.

He called on the police to carry out a thorough investigation into the matter to bring those responsible for the murder to justice.

He said he had contacted Dr Fernandez's wife to convey his condolences.

All MIC leaders had also been instructed to leave for Penang to look into the funeral arrangements and to provide moral support to the Fernandez family, he said.

MIC vice-president Datuk G. Palanivel said he was shocked at the sudden death of Fernandez, whom he described as one of the finest state assemblyman in the party.

His death was also a great loss to the party, he said, adding that the party conveyed its deepest sympathies to the bereaved family.

MIC secretary-general S. Sothinathan also expressed shock and sadness over the death.

Meanwhile, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Zin said he did not know of any problem that Dr Fernandez faced that could have led to the shooting.

"As far as I know, he had no problems," he told reporters in Langkawi.

Syed Razak said that the last time he met Dr Fernandez was at the wedding of a Kedah state executive councillor in Sungai Petani yesterday.

He said Dr Fernandez had a good record as Lunas state assemblyman for two terms.

He also said that the Barisan Nasional (BN) would hold a meeting in Alor Setar tonight to discuss the incident.

The BN holds 24 of the 36 state seats in Kedah while PAS holds the rest.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin said: "We should strongly condemn this action...it is not our culture."

He said that before jumping to any conclusion, the police should be allowed to conduct a detailed investigation.

"We have to find out what actually happened and let the police

investigate as only then can we take any action on the perpetrators of the crime," he told reporters at a charity dinner, here, tonight.

-- BERNAMA

SR KAY JK