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Mahathir-Suqiu

DR MAHATHIR SAYS HIS CRITICISM WAS NOT DIRECTED AT ALL CHINESE

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said his criticism against several groups for their extreme course of action should not be viewed as a criticism against all Chinese or even for that matter, all Malays.

He said he was perplexed as to why he was blamed for criticising the Malaysian Chinese Organisations Election Appeals Committee (Suqiu) when he had also criticised a group of Malay extremists like the Al-Maunah.

"I hope the Chinese will not feel that, when I criticise a group of (Chinese) extremists, I'm criticising all of them. If I criticise the Al-Ma'aunah, it doesn't mean that I am criticising all Malays...I can't be angry with all Malays," he said after the Umno Supreme Council meeting here today.

He was asked to comment on remarks made by Supreme Council member Datuk Shahrir Samad in Malaysiakini.com yesterday, attributing Dr Mahathir's criticism against the Chinese as one of the factors contributing to the defeat of the Barisan Nasional (BN) in the Lunas by-election in Kedah last Wednesday.

The Prime Minister said his criticism was directed at a certain group and not at the Chinese community as a whole.

Dr Mahathir said the BN, in particular the MCA and Gerakan, would be asked to continue with efforts to explain to the Chinese community several issues such as the Vision School concept which was used by the opposition to win over Chinese votes in the Lunas by-election.

He said this was necessary so that the small group of Chinese extremists in education would not be able to exert influence on the community on such issues as well as other issues relating to the Chinese community.

"After this, we will continue with our efforts to provide information so that the Chinese, who have been living in peace and harmony, will not be influenced by these extremists," he said.

He said the MCA and Gerakan probably failed to convince the Chinese in Lunas that the Vision School, which the government wanted to implement, was actually for the good of all communities in the country.

The Prime Minister said these Chinese extremists had been a problem to the country for years, always pressuring the community especially during election.

"When it's time for elections, they will incite (the Chinese) and pressure (the government). I can't accept this...pressure from my colleagues, yes but from these extremists, I will not permit," he said.

He said the Chinese in Malaysia had gained a lot from the facilities provided by the government such as being able to set up their own Chinese schools and free to use their own language, unlike in countries like the United States, England where such schools were non-existent.

"But in Malaysia, we give them Chinese schools and they can use their own language. We also do not try to Islamise the Chinese," he said.

There was also no restriction imposed on other communities, like the Malays, wanting to study in Chinese schools and the Chinese community should be thankful for what the government had given them, he said.

-- BERNAMA

APG AR ABG