

28 JUL 2000

Mahathir-Gathering

IGNORE CALLS TO JOIN DEMONSTRATION, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KOTA KINABALU, July 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today advised the people not to take part in a gathering which supporters of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim are planning to hold in Kuala Lumpur on Aug 4, the day the High Court is expected to deliver its verdict on Anwar's sodomy case.

"Don't respond to their calls," the Prime Minister told a news conference at the end of his three-day visit to Sabah.

He said the holding of such gatherings would affect the country's economy, especially the livelihood of petty traders who do business by the roadside.

"This is one process which will victimise poor people," Dr Mahathir said when asked to comment on the plans by Anwar's supporters as posted on the Internet.

Dr Mahathir also lamented the involvement of some students of public institutions of higher learning in demonstrations when their counterparts in private institutions were more concerned about their studies.

Asked on the Terengganu government's decision to bar women from participating in Quran reading competitions, Dr Mahathir said the contention that women's voice is "aurat" is merely the interpretation of PAS.

"That is their right, that is their interpretation of what is considered aurat," he said.

"A good Muslim should not raise his or her voice, but this is imposed on women only (purportedly) because it can arouse one's desire," he said.

Dr Mahathir said a Quran reading competition was a decorous affair where the attention of the audience was usually on the recital of Quranic verses.

"I think when we read the Quran, we are focused but it seems Terengganu PAS people...they cannot listen to women reading Quran," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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