

27 OCT 2000

Budget-Mahathir (Destruction)

LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THOSE WHO DESTROY NATIONAL IMAGE

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 27 (Bernama) -- The government is studying the possibility of taking legal action against Malaysians who run down the country abroad including those who appoint foreign firms for the purpose, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The prime minister said the government was studying the law closely to determine whether their actions, although done abroad, violated Malaysian law as they were targetting Malaysia with the purpose of destroying the country.

"We are studying the matter whether it is reasonable or otherwise, because if we strive to destroy our country, then we become traitors," he said at a media conference after the tabling of the 2001 Budget by Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin at the Dewan Rakyat today.

Dr Mahathir said the government viewed such actions as a violation of the law because even though they were done outside the country, the target was Malaysia and the purpose was to destroy Malaysia and make the people suffer.

He was asked to comment on press reports about the action by supporters of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who were alleged to have engaged a foreign firm to discredit Malaysia abroad.

Dr Mahathir said their objective was clearly to destroy Malaysia and cause the people to suffer because in a situation such as the one occurring in Iraq, for example, those who suffered were the people themselves who could not get food and medical supplies.

"For example in Iraq...the victim is not the leader but the people," he said, adding that these groups were prepared to destroy the country and cause the people to suffer merely because one of their leaders was convicted and imprisoned.

On the effects of the campaign, he said the government could not guarantee that foreign investors would come to Malaysia because even if they wanted to invest here, certainly they would not be able to do so if their governments were influenced by the campaign and took action to sanction Malaysia.

The prime minister said if the acts to discredit Malaysia led to a decline in national revenue, the government might not be able to provide to the people what they were enjoying previously.

He said the government would take efforts to explain the matter abroad but could not guarantee their effectiveness.

-- BERNAMA

MNY MNY AO