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`No bowing to external pressure'

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Malaysia will not bow to international pressure engineered by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's supporters, who have engaged a Washington-based lobby firm to publicise his cause, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Razak said today.

"It is the Malaysian people who have the right to determine and decide.

"Whatever they (Anwar supporters) do will not change Malaysia's stand," Najib told reporters at an open house held by MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.

Bernamea quoted a Singapore Straits Times report stating that Anwar's supporters had engaged a Washington-based lobby firm to highlight his cause and lobby for economic pressure on Malaysia.

Najib said such actions by Anwar's supporters would only end up hurting Malaysians.

"Their actions will cause hardship to the people. If our economy is adversely affected, it will be the people who will be affected."

He said similar actions in the past, to tarnish the country's reputation abroad, had failed because foreign investors still had confidence in Malaysia's economy.

Najib, who is also Umno vice-president, was asked how the party would respond to such actions.

"We are an open country. We cannot stop them from going abroad.

"For us, we will just have to explain to the whole world that whatever actions we take are based on the country's laws."

He said that if Anwar's supporters really loved the country, they would ensure that efforts to solve the country's political problems be confined within its borders.

Meanwhile, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim said today the Government does not act on challenges by individuals but based on law and evidence.

He added that if there was sufficient evidence that a person had broken the law, action would be taken, regardless of whether the person challenged that action be taken against him or otherwise.

Rais was referring to Parti Keadilan Nasional Youth chief Mohd Ezam Mohd Noor's challenge that authorities take action against him for disparaging the Prime Minister in the United States and Europe.

On whether action would be taken against Ezam, Rais said the Government would have to look into the matter and not act hastily.

In Alor Star, Backbencher's Club chairman Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis said Ezam should make use of local platforms to voice his dissatisfaction with the leadership of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Jamaluddin said disparaging the Prime Minister overseas was not only improper but also tantamount to treason.

He said Ezam's confession that he (Ezam) had smeared Dr Mahathir's name overseas could land him in trouble as he could be punished as a traitor to the nation.

Speaking after officiating the Tenaga Nasional Quran Education programme here today, he said Ezam's action amounted to economic sabotage of the country.

Jamaluddin was asked whether Ezam's statement was made to get the authorities to investigate the Opposition's allegations against Dr Mahathir and his Cabinet.

Yesterday, Utusan Malaysia reported that Ezam had confessed his involvement in a smear campaign against Dr Mahathir in the United States and Europe.

He was also quoted as saying that Keadilan president Datin Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, vice-president Tian Chua and informatin chief Ruslan Kassim were responsible in influencing Malaysian students in other countries.

Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Mohd Khir Toyo said if the report was true, then Ezam was ungrateful and disloyal to the country.

He said actions by certain Opposition leaders clearly showed they were fighting for their own personal interests or for a particular individual without considering the country's interest.

He believed that the Opposition's activities were masterminded by "outsiders" who had a hidden agenda against Malaysia.

In Kota Baru, adviser to the Finance Ministry Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said today the smearing of Malaysia's good name abroad by certain quarters had no effect on the country's economy nor would it keep foreign investors from coming. "The economic problem which we faced was due to the regional economic situation. It was not because of the lies and actions by the Opposition to tarnish the country and its leaders.

"Foreign countries know Malaysia better. They regard Malaysia as a friend and know Malaysia is a good place to invest. They are not influenced by the lies," he added.

He said they knew better than to interfere in Malaysia's internal affairs.

Mustapa said this when asked to comment on whether actions by Opposition quarters in spreading lies and defamatory remarks to tarnish Malaysia's image abroad had any effect on the country's economy.

In Malacca, Umno supreme council member Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Mohd Rustam said Keadilan leaders were being used by the international socialist movement to slander the Government and Dr Mahathir.

Expressing his disappointment with the confession by Ezam that he was involved in the campaigns in US and Europe, Mohd Ali, who is also Chief Minister and State Umno liaison chief, said Keadilan leaders should stop bad-mouthing the Prime Minister who had done a lot for the country.

Mohd Ali said Keadilan leaders should repent as their actions would only jeopardise the nation.

"By instigating foreign investors not to invest in the country, they are doing an injustice to the country and its people."

While the Government was doing its level best to spur economic growth, Keadilan leaders were doing otherwise, he said.

Mohd Ali said they were traitors and their actions were unforgiveable.

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