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Mahathir-Opposition

OPPOSITION LEADERS ARRESTED FOR BREAKING THE LAW, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the recent arrest of several opposition leaders was because they broke the law and not because they are opposition leaders.

He said everyone was equal before the law and would not escape the consequences if they were found breaking the law.

"They (opposition leaders) are arrested not because they are opposition leaders. They are arrested because they break the law and anybody who breaks the law will face the same consequences," he told reporters after he and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, received thousands of well-wishers at his Hari Raya open house at Seri Perdana, here.

"These are the very people who talk about the rule of the law. They seem to think that the rule of law should be applied to other people and to government personnel but not to them. But the law in Malaysia applies to everybody and even the royal members are not exempted," he said.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the the arrest of Parti Keadilan Nasional Youth chief Ezam Mohamed Noor and Hulu Klang state assemblyman Azmin Ali yesterday. A local daily reported today that Ezam and Azmin were picked up to facilitate police investigation into alleged disturbances during the Nov 29 Lunas state by-election.

Three other Keadilan leaders were also arrested recently in connection with the same matter.

Dr Mahathir said opposition leaders or members were not privileged people and as such, they must be ready to face the law if they were against the law.

"There is a feeling that opposition leaders are privileged people. They are not privileged people. They break the law, they have to face the consequences," he said.

He said it must be understood that the rule of law meant everybody was equal before the law.

"Perhaps we should try and understand that before you keep on saying that opposition leaders are arrested," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he hoped that everyone, including the foreign press, would understand the rule of law in the country, which applies to everyone, including ministers.

He also denied that the arrests were an indication of a widespread operation.

"It is not a widespread operation. It is for very specific reasons. The law is there, it is open under which they were arrested and they will have to face the consequences," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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