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Mahathir-Opposition

OPPOSITION WORRIED GOVT MAY TAKE ACTION AGAINST THEM- DR M

SERDANG, Dec 15 (Bernama) - The Prime Minister today dispelled rumours allegedly being spread by the Opposition that the government will launch an operation similar to the "Ops Lalang" of 1987 to arrest opposition leaders.

"Not that I know of. May be the Opposition knows more than I do or they feel guilty," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said when asked by reporters whether the government was contemplating action against opposition leaders who breached the country's laws.

Speaking to reporters after handing over the ISO 9001 certification to the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Veterinary Medical Faculty, here, he said, "They (the opposition) know what they are doing is wrong and they are worried that the government may take action against them."

The Prime Minister said the political situation now did not warrant that sort of action (arresting).

However, he said if the Opposition pushed the government and it was found that they were not respecting law and order, the government "might have to do something about it."

"Their assumption is that if they demonstrate by tens of thousands, the police will be powerless as when arrested, they will all say that they were there by accident."

"This is what they are saying all the time...the whole idea is of course to try and disrupt the running of the government," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir's statement today is the second on the subject since the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said just after the 1999 general election that government would not initiate "Ops Lalang II".

The 1987 Operation Lalang resulted in the arrest of several opposition leaders under the Internal Security Act (ISA) to avert racial clashes.

Dr Mahathir said the phenomenon of trying to disrupt the smooth administration of the government happened in many developing countries whereas in developed countries, the campaigning and slandering of the government stopped after the elections.

"But in developing countries the loser of the election will try to bring down the (elected) government through demonstrations and riots...but they forget that if they form the government they will also face the same situation," he said.

The Prime Minister said developing countries which had democratically elected governments were not very stable but in Malaysia "most Malaysians are sensible people but certain people still have not learnt the ethics of democracy."

Asked for his reaction to PAS President Datuk Fadzil Noor's statement that demonstrations should be allowed, Dr Mahathir said demonstrations were allowed provided there was a reason for it.

"But everytime you lose something and you want to demonstrate that is wrong...if you have some demands, maybe the government has not paid attention (and) after a long time, people might want to demonstrate, but here is an opposition party which has representatives in Parliament...at every level... they even have two state governments," he said.

He said Opposition parties must make use of these avenues provided to them democratically rather than taking to the streets to vent their frustration if any.

He said Opposition parties should stop these demonstrations as their action was causing a lot of inconvenience to other Malaysians.

"They don't care what happens in the country, for them (the Opposition), when the country is in turmoil, they will be able to get maximum benefits for their party," Dr Mahathir said.

On the 100 demands made by the Peninsular Federation of Malay Students (GPMS) yesterday, he said the demands were made in reaction to similar demands made by the Malaysian Chinese Organisation's Election Appeals Committee (Siqui).

Siqui, just before the 1999 general elections, made 83 demands to the government including equal rights for all races in the country.

"The GPMS demands that the PM must always be a Malay...I suppose that is the direct reaction to demands made by the other party (Siqui)."

Dr Mahathir said for 43 years, Malaysians had worked hard to bring all the races in the country together "and we have achieved a degree of harmony which is not known in any other multiracial country."

"But these small groups insist on demanding things only for themselves and in so doing they provoke other people to make other demands," he added.

On whether he would ask the GPMS to stop making demands, he said, "Well their reply will be why don't you ask them (Siqui) to stop first...I don't like these things...actually both of them should stop."

In Malaysia, he said no race would get everything that it wanted and that everyone must be prepared to sacrifice something "if we are to have a peaceful nation."

--BERNAMA

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