

09 DEC 2000

Mahathir-Limo

STRIKES NOT PROPER WAY TO RESOLVE PROBLEM, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the strike by Airport Limo (M) Sdn Bhd drivers is not the proper way to resolve the problem between them and the management of the limousine service operating at the KL International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang.

In fact, Dr Mahathir said that the strike would tarnish the image of the nation and also the KLIA, the main gateway to the country.

"You cannot punish one party because you have grouses with another party. You have grouses with the management and you punish travellers...this is unfair.

"That is why I have always said that if there is a problem, hold consultation. If this cannot be done with the management, submit a report and we will take action. But don't cease operation because this will affect others who have nothing to do with it," he told reporters after visiting the Land and Cooperative Development Ministry, here.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the strike staged since Thursday by hundreds of Airport Limo drivers to show their dissatisfaction with the management, claiming that their welfare was not being taken care of by the company.

Dr Mahathir said: "I sympathise with the limo drivers...it's not that I feel no sympathy for them. But that (strike) is not the way. You do this, you destroy everything else as well...you destroy the image of the country and also the KLIA. You destroy everything".

The prime minister said that the setting up of the KLIA provided job opportunities to the limo drivers but such opportunities would be affected by their action to stage a strike.

He said that everyone including himself faces problems but a strike would only create more problems.

Asked whether the limo drivers were lacking in national consideration, Dr Mahathir said: "I hope they will give some thought to the problems that they have created...It's difficult for us to sympathise with them as they have resorted to something not good for the country".

The strike resulted in passengers and the public turning to the city metered taxi service and taxis normally operating at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang to proceed to their destinations.

Dr Mahathir was also asked on the action by Datuk Abdul Aziz Sheikh Fadzir who retracted his earlier intention to resign as Umno Youth vice head to take responsibility for the defeat of the Barisan Nasional (BN) in the recent Lunas state by-election.

He said: "The thing is that at the end of an election and we are defeated, (we) will normally feel disappointed and in our disappointment, we will not make wise decisions.

"We should wait until we can study all the factors. Only then can we make a decision...who is to be blamed and who is not to be blamed."

Dr Mahathir felt that Abdul Aziz's decision to resign was too premature.

"I think he has changed his mind. It's normal," he said.

When asked on whether the resign-and-retract action has become a culture among politicians, he said: "I don't know. Maybe it is a culture but I don't think he (Abdul Aziz) gains anything.

"Some people threatens to resign because they want something else for themselves...not that he can become the Youth chief if he resigns," he said.

On former Deputy Prime Minister Tun Ghafar Baba's reported assertion that one of the reasons why the BN lost in Lunas was that party workers

were not well-informed about government policies, Dr Mahathir said: "Well, there is that element also. There are other elements".

Dr Mahathir sarcastically said there was a huge number of Opposition members in Lunas so much so that the BN could not find a place to hold a rally.

He was also appreciative of the Wanita Umno's role in the Lunas by-election.

"In fact, where the Wanita worked hard, we won. In the Malay areas, we won quite a lot," he said.

On the 41st National Council of Islamic Affairs Meeting on Thursday, Dr Mahathir said it felt that action needed to be taken against those abusing religion for political interest.

He cited as an example the campaign by PAS while "terawih" prayers were being performed during the fasting month.

"They campaign for PAS openly, affecting those whose intention is only to pray. They came to perform the terawih prayers, not to listen to political speeches," he said.

He said that such an incident occurred at a mosque near the LTSAAS in Subang.

"Such a thing is an abuse of the mosque. Mosques are not for such things," he said, adding that those performing Friday prayers had also been interrupted.

-- BERNAMA

MAM APG RM