

16/04/2000

`Struggle without tarnishing image'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight said the people realised that in struggling for something, it was not necessary to tarnish the country's image and adversely affect its economy.

He said when demonstrations occurred, the victims were businessmen, especially small traders.

Dr Mahathir was speaking on his return from the summit of the Group of 77 (G-77) developing countries in Havana, Cuba.

He was asked about the demonstration held by opposition supporters in the Federal capital today.

Dr Mahathir said demonstrations would also keep tourists away and adversely affect the business of the hotel industry, among others.

"So demonstrations do not bring any benefit, but tarnish the country's image. I hope the people do not support demonstrations."

Dr Mahathir said the general election had allowed the various parties to get seats in Parliament and State legislative assemblies.

"There they can voice their views democratically. That is the best way for our country. Nobody loses and they can voice their problems."

Asked about the detention of three Parti Keadilan Nasional members, the Prime Minister said the Government had a responsibility to act although there were some who said it should not do anything and let chaos reign.

The Government, he said, had to protect the rights of the majority of the people who did not want riots and demonstrations.

"And if it does not act, the Government is not being responsible. What is the good of having a Government if it cannot protect the rights of the majority of the people who do not want the kind of activities planned by Keadilan?"

On hand to welcome the Prime Minister was Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Dr Abdul Hamid Othman.

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