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Mahathir-Non-Muslims

SUPPORT PRESENT GOVERNMENT, DR MAHATHIR TELLS NON-MUSLIMS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 11 (Bernama) -- Non-Muslims in the country can be assured of protection against persecution if they continue to support the present government, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said this when asked by reporters of the fear among non-Muslims in the wake of the killing of two hostages by the Al-Ma'unah group that staged the arms heist from two army camps on July 2.

The group held four hostages during the five-day standoff with security forces at the group's hideout in Sauk in Perak but two of them, both non-Muslims, were found tortured and murdered following the surrender of 27 of its members.

"If you ensure this government continues in power, that will be the assurance for non-Muslims," he said when asked what assurance the government would give to the non-Muslims following the heist in which the group emptied the two camps of more than 100 M16 and Steyr files and thousands of ammunition.

"Some non-Muslims want to play with fire...they are saying they can support this kind of people, and not get hurt. If you support the wrong kind of idea, you will get hurt," Dr Mahathir said after launching the Malaysian Structural Steel Convention and Exhibition, here.

Dr Mahathir said it was the people, and not him, who could guarantee that the peace and stability enjoyed by the country now would remain.

The prime minister said yesterday the government, led by Umno, would not tolerate efforts by any group to persecute or kill anyone simply because of differences in race and religion.

"The people can support this kind of people if they want instability in the country," he said.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said nobody's life was cheaper than others.

He said that the government wants to maintain stability in the country and did not want to see Muslims or non-Muslims killed.

Dr Mahathir said the government's approach was different compared to some other political parties which created hate against the government in order to win votes.

Asked if the group's activities could be viewed by the non-Muslims as part of Islam's teachings, Dr Mahathir said it was not part of Islam.

"As far as we are concerned, this is not part of our religion. It's a deviationist group. We will not support it but I am sure there will be people who will support this people.

"Soon we will hear that this was actually 'sandiwara' (opera) by Umno. We have sandiwara where people get tortured and killed," he said.

When asked if it was true that the group had wanted former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to be freed from jail, Dr Mahathir said it was not one of their demands.

Anwar is serving a six-year jail sentence for corruption by interfering in police investigations into allegations of sexual misconduct against him.

-- BERNAMA

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