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`Those who smear us are traitors'

Farush Khan

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Sun. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today labelled as traitors those who launched smear campaigns to discourage foreigners from investing in this country and hoped it would not get any support.

The Prime Minister said no matter what their grievances were, they should not have resorted to such action as it could damage the country's economy and was detrimental to the people's well being.

He expressed disappointment with opposition party Parti Keadilan Nasional whom he said had paid a United States firm to discredit Malaysia so that foreigners would not invest in the country.

He was speaking to about 300 Malaysians residing in Brunei during lunch at the Empire Hotel and Country Resort in Jerudong, about 20 kilometres from here. Among those who attended were lawyers, businessmen, teachers, and university students.

Accompanied by Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali and a 42-member entourage, Dr Mahathir, flew in from Hong Kong where he addressed the Asia Society last night.

After lunch, Dr Mahathir paid a courtesy call on Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah at the Istana Nurul Iman. He went for horse riding in the evening at the Jerudong Polo Club.

Dr Mahathir then had a meeting with the Sultan where they discussed matters of bilateral interests. He is scheduled to return to Kuala Lumpur tomorrow.

There are between 20,000 and 23,000 Malaysians living in Brunei.

Though he did not name anyone, he was obviously referring to the admission confession by Keadilan Youth chief Mohamad Ezam Mohamad Nor that he had visited the United States and Europe recently to foment hatred against Dr Mahathir for the Government's treatment of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is now serving a jail sentence.

Ezam was quoted as saying that a number of leaders in Keadilan, including its president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who is Anwar's wife, was responsible for launching the smear campaign.

Dr Mahathir also took to task those who resorted to action that could split the Malays.

"The Malays are not safe as yet. They are still behind in education and economy. If there is a split, they will not achieve anything. They may be colonised again."

He hoped everyone understood the importance of Malay unity.