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Mahathir-Chinese

WHOM THE MAJORITY ACCEPTS CAN BECOME PM, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, July 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today told the Dewan Rakyat today that only people acceptable to the majority of multi-racial and multi-religious Malaysians can become the country's prime minister.

As such, he said, a Chinese whom the Malays could readily accept could become prime minister.

"But I'm apprehensive that with opposition party leaders constantly fanning racial sentiments, harping on the deprivation of the rights of non-Muslims and instilling fear among the Chinese, among other things, such people will not be accepted by the Indians and the Chinese.

"And such people cannot become PM," he said replying to Datuk Dr Yusof Yacob (BN-Sipitang) during question time.

In a supplementary question, the member sought Dr Mahathir's clarification over his statement about Chinese becoming the country's prime minister.

Yusof also asked Dr Mahathir the kind of Malays or Muslims preferable for now and in the future.

The member asked about Dr Mahathir's preference between intelligent Malays with mastery of all disciplines of modern and religious knowledge and on good terms with the other races and pious Malays who perform both religious and social obligations according to Islam but who hold in contempt the other communities and anyone not subscribing to their cause.

Dr Mahathir said moderate Malays who uphold Islamic teachings are those acceptable to the Chinese.

"It is for this reason that till today only Malays with such attributes can become PM. As for those in the other category, they can become MB (menteri besar) in one or two states. But I reckon, that's about all," he said to the laughter of government back-benchers.

To a supplementary question from Mohamad Sabu (PAS-Kuala Kedah), the prime minister said his statement about Chinese becoming PM was never meant as an instruction.

"While my view got considered, it was never instructive in nature. What I said will not become reality unless the people choose to make it so," he said.

To another question by Mohamad suggesting that the prime minister's statement had created anxiety and worry among Umno members, Dr Mahathir said:"So it's now obvious that PAS is willing to accept Kit Siang (DAP chairman Lim Kit Siang)...whereas Umno is perhaps a bit cautious. That explains why Umno members are worried."

Dr Mahathir also said that if he was all that powerful, PAS could not have existed in the country by now.

However, he said, the country's laws and the democracy in place would not allow that to happen.

To the original question from Kerk Kim Hock (DAP-Kota Melaka), Dr Mahathir said democracy in Malaysia provides for any political party that secures a majority in a general election to form the government and for its leader to become prime minister.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's Constitution is silent on the racial criterion for the prime ministership.

Dr Mahathir said his statement about non-Malays becoming prime minister was not all intended to strike fear among the Malays of losing their dominance but he was merely stating a political fact which could become a reality given the country's practice of democratic principles.

"Let's not forget that PAS leaders too have expressed willingness to accept Lim Kit Siang as PM and I believe Lim Kit Siang is not a Malay.

"Was that also meant to scare the Malays. Only God knows," he said.

To a supplementary question from Kerk, Dr Mahathir said it was up to others to interpret his statement.

"I only make a statement. The interpretation depends on those concerned. If the DAP welcomes it, just say so...Don't talk about others," he said replying to Kerk's remark that while the DAP and the Chinese community welcomed the prime minister's statement, Umno members appeared to have taken it as a warning to the Malays.

-- BERNAMA

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