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Mahathir-Law

WRONG PERCEPTION OF RULE OF LAW BY THOSE CHAMPIONING IT, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 12 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today hit out at those who seem to think that the rule of law is upheld only if members of the government, and not the opposition, are brought to court and given jail sentences.

The prime minister said the fact was that those who talked about the rule of law did not actually understand what it was all about.

"For them, the rule of law operates if ministers are arrested, thrown into jail. But if their people are accused, arrested and brought to court, it is not the rule of law, especially if they are found guilty.

"The people from opposition parties cannot be guilty but the government parties must be guilty," he told reporters at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang upon his return from a 10-day visit to Britain and a short trip to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Dr Mahathir said this in reference to small demonstrations by the human rights activist group, Amnesty International, when he was in Britain, to get him to release former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from prison.

Anwar is currently serving six years' jail for corrupt practice, to be followed by 15 years for sodomy.

Dr Mahathir said it had been explained that he did not have the power to apprehend or release people.

He said the practice of the rule of law in Malaysia entailed that whoever went against the law would be brought to court and sentenced if found guilty.

"And when sentence is passed, it's not the prime minister who can set aside the sentence. We don't have the power," he said.

Dr Mahathir also spoke of the good response from Malaysian students in Manchester and Cambridge during his visits there.

"Although some Pakistani students had asked the Malaysian students during Friday prayers not to attend the meeting at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, all of them attended 'full-house'," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that in Cambridge, the questions posed to him were more pro-opposition.

On his brief visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina, he said the Balkan state was recovering from the ethnic conflicts of the 1990s.

"They did quite a good recovery, they have rebuilt the town of Sarajevo. The situation appears calm but the racial politics are still there. They will have elections in November," he said.

In his discussion with President Aliza Izetbegovic in Sarajevo, Dr Mahathir reiterated Kuala Lumpur's commitment to help rebuild Bosnia.

-- BERNAMA
MAM AFY ES JK