

29 MAR 2001

Mahathir-Riots

A GOVERNMENT PROPPED UP BY RIOTERS WILL NOT LAST, SAYS PM

PETALING JAYA, March 29 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said any government that replaces the one brought down through riots will face the same fate.

He said that some groups believed that by staging riots daily, the country would be destabilised and subsequently the government of the day could be toppled.

"But let me state it clearly here that once a government is toppled through riots, the one replacing it would also suffer the same fate," he said.

Dr Mahathir was addressing residents of Kampung Medan and nearby settlements at the Taman Medan playing field in Jalan Klang Lama here today.

The area was the scene of clashes between rival resident groups early this month in which six people died.

The prime minister's unannounced visit there was a pleasant surprise to the residents of the various communities who thronged the field in droves to shake hands with him.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, the Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai and Selangor Police Chief Datuk Nik Ismail Nik Yusoff.

The prime minister said while the situation in Jalan Klang Lama had improved much, certain groups were still trying to capitalise on the fragile situation to achieve their objectives through evil ways by staging attacks in other areas to infuriate the residents and spark off riots.

While referring to two of Malaysia's neighbours whose governments were toppled through riots, Dr Mahathir said certain groups in the country thought they could also do the same in Malaysia.

"In other countries riots caused lawlessness and bring down governments giving rise to new ones. This is what these groups want to happen in the country," he said.

As such Dr Mahathir said it was crucial that Malaysians preserve the peace and avoid racial misunderstanding because no one would benefit from a riot-torn country.

"Instead all will be losers," he said.

Dr Mahathir said a peaceful Malaysia would generate greater development that would bring good to all.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians should respect the democratic process of electing the government and cease animosity between one another.

Any quarters intending to change the government should wait for the next five years and respect the country's laws and administration.

Dr Mahathir said multi-racial and multi-religious Malaysians could co-exist in peace as this is allowed by each other's religion.

"They are human beings and so are we. If we resort to war, we can destroy them and they too can destroy us. If we start attacking each other, fights would spread to other areas and eventually there will be no peace in the country," he said.

Malaysia had enjoyed undisrupted peace for the past 43 years except for the blood incidents of May 13 1969 and even so the government managed to quell the disturbance within a short time and prevented it from spreading to areas outside of Kuala Lumpur, he said.

The prime minister, who saw a night market about to start business on

his way to the field, appealed to residents of Taman Medan and nearby settlements to rebuild the strong goodwill and peace that existed there all this while.

Only with peace and unity, the various communities there could do business at the night market undisrupted.

"But if there are riots, be they petty traders...or big-time businessmen, all of us stand to lose as we cannot buy or sell anything," he said.

While assuring the residents that the government would strive to resolve their problems, including housing, Dr Mahathir said they should be patient as the task could not be done overnight.

Although he had wanted to visit the area much earlier on, some thought it would be better for him to defer it then, said the prime minister while urging the people to also thank the police for bringing the situation under control.

While visiting the Kampung Medan longhouses occupied by Indian residents, the prime minister said he was informed of their problems by Works Minister and MIC president Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu.

Dr Mahathir promised them the government would do its utmost to tackle their woes and urged them to maintain good relations with the Malay community there in carrying on with their daily activities.

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