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Mahathir-Protest

DON'T WORRY ABOUT PROTESTS, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, July 16 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today took a swipe at people who would protest against everything but the Prime Minister advised Malaysians at large not to worry about it.

Referring to yesterday's arrest of more than 30 people for taking part in an illegal gathering at the Kamunting detention camp in protest of the Internal Security Act (ISA), Dr Mahathir said he did not think it was a big protest.

The ISA allows for detention without trial, among other things.

"I don't know how many, I haven't received any report yet. But this is the new culture, you have to protest against everything," he told a news conference after delivering a keynote address at the 2001 Malaysian Electric Power Forum, here.

Dr Mahathir said this was also the trend all over the world, adding that he was informed that some 100,000 people were planning to stage protests targeted at the G7 meeting of the world's richest nations in Italy.

"And that is a much bigger thing. In Malaysia, may be 30 people, 100 people protesting is a small thing. I don't see why people should be worried about this thing," he said.

On amending the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971, Dr Mahathir said such a proposed exercise would take time carry out to ensure that the objectives are met.

"If we amend something and the result is not what we desire, the people will blame us for being hasty," said the prime minister.

The government was considering amending the Act upon realising that undergraduates were no longer using facilities for learning but were more inclined to indulge in non-campus-related activities.

Dr Mahathir reiterated his observation that universities were no longer playing their intended role but have turned into centres of agitation instead.

"Students are not bothered about studying. We have spent considerable amount of money, public money and we do not get the desired returns. We shall take action," the prime minister added.

-- BERNAMA

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