

29 DEC 2001

Mahathir-Al-Ma'unah

DR M: COURT'S DECISION ON AL-MA'UNAH MEMBERS A MATTER OF JUSTICE

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 29 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government has never tolerated violent acts like the one perpetrated by the Al-Ma'unah group and people should be aware of the legal repercussions that await those who commit them.

Commenting on yesterday's death sentence and life imprisonment passed on the 19 Al-Ma'unah members for waging war against the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, the Prime Minister said: "The government has never tolerated that kind of action. People should know. They should not have done it.

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman and Umno president, said this at a news conference after opening the 48th General Assembly of the People's Progressive Party here today.

Asked whether he was happy with the sentence, he said it was not a question of happiness or joy.

"I'm not saying that I'm happy. I'm not happy when somebody is sentenced to death. This is the decision. It's not a question of happiness or joy or anything like that. It's a question of justice being upheld," he said.

Those sentenced to death are Al-Ma'unah leader Mohamed Amin Mohamed Razali, his right-hand man Zahit Muslim and the group's northern leader Jamaludin Darus.

The offence was committed at three places -- two in Hulu Perak and the third at Bukit Jenalek, Sauk in Kuala Kangsar. Detective Kpl R. Saghadevan and trooper Matthew Medan were murdered at Bukit Jenalek.

Dr Mahathir said: "I think the families of those killed will feel that in our country justice is served irrespective of race or religion.

"Whoever commits murder will receive the appropriate punishment according to the law."

He said Malaysia was governed by laws which were enforced without any discrimination, whether by status, religion or race.

Dr Mahathir hoped that all parties would respect the court's decision.

"I follow whatever is decided by the court. Although sometimes we feel uneasy, we (need to) abide by court decisions because this is the process of justice in our country," he said.

Asked on the latest regarding the former governor of Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao, Nur Misuari, he said there was no shift in the government's plan to send him back to the Philippines despite a reported appeal by his family members.

Misuari was arrested on Nov 24 on Pulau Jampiras off Sabah for illegally entering Malaysia while reportedly fleeing southern Philippines after declaring war against Manila.

"The appeal by family members is not for us to determine because this is our undertaking that anybody involved in such activities, we will not give shelter," Dr Mahathir said.

On Umno Youth's call to the government to investigate the background of Misuari's lawyer Elly Velez Lao Pamatong, he said: "We also want to know; if he intervenes, we want to know who he is."

On the special payment provided by the federal government to the people of Terengganu and Kelantan, Dr Mahathir said PAS always twisted what was done by the federal government.

On MCA, he reiterated his advice that there should not be any quarrel in BN component parties as this could weaken them.

"It's good that it now looks like they (feuding MCA members) are coming together. They want to work together to ensure that we win in the Indera Kayangan by-election. So, it is good for the BN. That's the BN spirit," he added.

Earlier, in his speech, PPP president Datuk M. Kayveas said the strength of present-day political institutions depended very much on the ability to confront issues like human rights, the link between democracy and human rights, virtual politics played out through the Internet and the relationship between politics and national and universal economic developments.

He said PPP wanted BN to be the sole political party representing all the races in the country.

Kayveas also said the party planned to set up the PPP University which would take in students without placing too much emphasis on academic qualifications.

"We want to provide higher education facilities for those without good academic background but are keen to become highly skilled young professionals in certain fields," he said.

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