

25 AUG 2001

Mahathir-KMM

GOVT IN DILEMMA OVER KMM ISSUE- DR M

IPOH, Aug 25 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister said today the government is in a dilemma over the arrest of the members of the Malaysia Militant Group (KMM) as it cannot explain at length on the issue to the people because of legal constraints while at the same time the opposition was making political capital out of it.

"The Government is unable to explain the KMM activities to the people because of the limitations imposed by the law and this may cause the people to lose confidence in it," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"We are facing a little problem. This case will be brought to court. We do not want to prejudice this case by making this and that announcement," he said.

However the opposition was turning this into a political issue by claiming that the disclosure of the KMM activities was a play staged by the government, he said.

"So the government is play acting....even allowing police to shoot dead people. I think the opposition party is being totally irresponsible....this matter should not be politicised," he said at the Sultan Azlan Shah Airport before leaving for Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Mahathir said the laws in Malaysia were stricter than in other countries where people and the media could discuss a case openly even if a trial on it was in progress.

"Like the case of O.J. Simpson (American sports star). When a trial is in progress in the court, a trial over the media is also on but here we have to be careful," he said.

Dr Mahathir said if the opposition party was afraid that it would be indirectly linked to the KMM it should state that it was not the party's policy and that only certain individuals were acting on their own such as the Kelantan Menteri Besar's son, Nik Adli Nik Abdul Aziz.

Nik Adli was detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) recently along with some others for allegedly being involved in the KMM.

Asked whether the government would stop making statements on the KMM, Dr Mahathir said the government had to give information to the people eager for news on that.

"So we are now collecting the facts and when the time comes we will expose it," he said.

On news reports that firearms were being smuggled into Malaysia from Thailand, Dr Mahathir said this was still happening despite the various measures that had been taken such as the building of a wall along the border.

He said the authorities had realised that KMM members had been buying weapons from various places such as M16 rifles from Thailand.

Dr Mahathir said the government would further tighten controls at the border to check the smuggling activities.

On the existence of an underground Jihad movement at Universiti Utara Malaysia, the Prime Minister said this matter should be urgently addressed.

"This thing seems to be on the increase. We need to control the situation," he said.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about the statement by a spokesman of the Indonesian Foreign Ministry that Malaysia's proposal to whip illegal immigrants could harm relations between the two countries, he said it should not be the case.

"Singapore is whipping.....how about relations with Singapore. Even terrorists are among those coming in," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said he did not know if President Megawati Sukarnoputri will raise the issue with him when the Indonesian leader arrives in Malaysia on Monday.

-- BERNAMA

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