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Mahathir-Corruption

MAKING PROMISES INDULGED BY THE OPPOSITION A FORM OF CORRUPTION, SAYS
PM

KUALA LUMPUR, March 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today opposition parties cannot say that they do not indulge in corrupt practices because making promises to win support is also a form of corruption.

He said that promising those who support a certain party that they would go straight to heaven and remain a Muslim was moral corruption which was more effective among people who do not have a strong grasp of the religion.

"They say you can go to heaven if you vote for PAS...that's corruption. You offer something in return for something...something illegal," he told a news conference after opening a seminar on "Integrity In Business - The Way Forward" at Nikko Hotel here.

He was asked what measures were being taken by the government to overcome lies and allegations by the opposition that the government was indulging in corrupt practices.

Dr Mahathir said that the government had already explained to the people in refuting the allegations by the opposition that it was corrupt.

Asked on the level of corruption in the country, Dr Mahathir said that corruption was still viewed negatively.

That was why, he said, it was still at the level where bribes were given "under the table" or discreetly.

"There are countries where corruption is practised in the open...in Malaysia this does not happen, but it does not mean it does not happen at all. But the ACA (Anti Corruption Agency) knows this very well...they have the means of detecting, they can monitor from afar. I would like to warn the people not to be involved in corruption as the ACA has the means to look at them from a great distance," he said.

Opening the seminar organised by the ACA, Dr Mahathir said that the democratic system which provides the right to the people to vote could also induce corrupt practices, resulting in the election of candidates who are not necessarily the best to run the country.

"Instead the voters elect candidates who offer or promise something to them, whether for this world or the hereafter. As such, the government will comprise people who resort to corruption and not those efficient to run the country or rule the state," he said.

The prime minister said that the attitude of the people and their strong religious conviction were more effective in curbing corruption than laws and actions of enforcement agencies.

Dr Mahathir said that if society were to view corruption as a terrible crime and a shameful offence, then there would be fewer cases of corruption.

"Those offering or accepting (bribes) should feel guilty or shameful. The general public and the community should also be ashamed should corrupt practices occur in their midst," he said.

Strict law enforcement, he said, would not necessarily have the desired effect. It would be better to turn to religious teachings to overcome corruption, he said.

"Religious conviction will lead to a dignified way of life. No religion advocates the crime of corruption," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that should corruption becomes rampant, it would not benefit society and the country, and instead would result in the escalating

cost of living.

He said that communities and countries which accept corruption as a normal practice had all been left behind and would never be able to be progressive or successful.

During a dialogue session later, Dr Mahathir said that efforts to inculcate noble values in schools and government departments were not successful as those entrusted with the task had taken advantage of the opportunity for political purposes.

"If they have actually imparted knowledge on Islam which abhors corruption, we would not be facing a problem now. But religious teachers place emphasis on their political beliefs. Instead of inculcating abhorrence of corruption, they instil hatred towards the government and certain people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the government failed to promote such values because even though it was the one which formulated the policy, those entrusted with implementing it had used the opportunity to win support for certain parties.

Present at the function were International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim and ACA Director-General Datuk Ahmad Zaki Husin.

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