

10 MAR 2001

Mahathir-Stand

PM SAYS SILENT MAJORITY SHOULD VOICE UP OPPOSITION TO STREET DEMOS

PUTRAJAYA, March 10 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysians who oppose street demonstrations should state their stand if they want to see peace preserved in the country.

He said by keeping silent they only gave the perpetrators the impression that they had the blessing and support of those who were actually anti-street demonstrations.

"Some quarters argue that if they condemn street demonstrations they would appear to be pro-government. This does not necessarily mean so, but (it means that) they are simply peace-loving," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a meeting with a 21-member delegation from silat and martial arts associations at Seri Perdana, the prime minister's official residence here today.

Earlier, the delegation, claiming to represent about 5.3 million martial arts exponents of various races nation-wide, handed over to the prime minister a memorandum calling for a stop to street demonstrations planned by any political party.

The delegation also declared support and loyalty to the elected government in the interest of prolonged peace and national stability.

Dr Mahathir said disenchanted citizens could change the government through general elections.

"In Malaysia, there is no restriction on choosing who should be the government," he said.

The prime minister cited past examples of the opposition ruling Penang and Sabah and now Kelantan and Terengganu are opposition-run states.

Dr Mahathir said toppling the government through street demonstrations would not benefit anyone except that any semblance of disorder would only frighten away investors, both local and foreign.

"All will eventually lose out when the country is destabilised," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government of the day was legitimately elected by the people through a general election which gave the ruling party two-thirds majority.

He said a government illegally installed would also be similarly unseated by dissatisfied groups later.

The prime minister said street demonstrations would also erode the credibility of the law enforcers when policemen were challenged and abused, for instance.

The prime minister advised students in particular not to allow themselves to be tools to organisers of street demonstrations.

"While we have fought hard to gain independence so that they can acquire knowledge, there are others who instigate them to demonstrate," he said.

Getting involved in street demonstrations only showed that students were unappreciative of the opportunities and funding provided by the government for them to get educated, said Dr Mahathir who likened the situation to throwing money down the drain.

The prime minister advised martial art organisations in the country to remind their members, especially students to concentrate on their studies while mastering the art of self-defence.

"The aim is not to attack others but for self-defence and to defend peace," he said.

Dr Mahathir expressed appreciation to the delegation for stating its stand of rejecting street demonstrations.

Master of Seni Silat Lincah Association of Malaysia Datuk Omardin Mauju, who led the delegation, handed over the memorandum to Dr Mahathir.

Senior officials of the national Shito-Ryu Karate-Do, Goshin-Ryu-Karate, Shorin-Ryu Karate, Kokusai Jujutsu Ryu associations, the Global Taekwondo Confederation of Malaysia, Yoshinkan Aikido and the Kalari Payat Association of Malaysia were also in the delegation.

Meanwhile, at the meeting Dr Sabree Salleh of the Malaysian Taekwondo Confederation was appointed founding chairman of the Waja Diri Council of Malaysia, a proposed umbrella body for all the silat and martial art organisations represented in the delegation to today's meeting with Dr Mahathir.

Dr Sabree requested Dr Mahathir to be council patron and in response the prime minister said his office would positively consider the invitation.

-- BERNAMA

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