

14/01/2002

PM: Defections, DAP's disinterest signs of Keadilan's imminent doom

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LANGKAWI, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he was certain the defections of 69 key Perlis Parti Keadilan Nasional members and the DAP's disinterest in the opposition pact were signs of Keadilan's imminent doom.

Dr Mahathir said Keadilan was a very fragile party that could easily crack, possesses limited aims and has members who lack dedication to the party's struggle.

Asked how he viewed the developments in light of the upcoming Indera Kayangan by-election on Saturday, Dr Mahathir said things `look good'.

"This is especially so as many are pulling out of Keadilan and not wanting to be in the party anymore. Secondly, the DAP no longer wants to be involved in their pact (Barisan Alternatif), and we find many Keadilan members also disinterested.

"As such, I am sure these are signs that Keadilan will gradually disappear," he said after inspecting ongoing construction work at the Gunung Machinchang cable car project in Teluk Burau. Keadilan's Indera Kayangan by-election director Mejar (Rtd) Mohd Shariff Abdul Razak and 68 others quit Keadilan yesterday and applied to join Umno.

Mohd Shariff cited disillusionment with recent developments in the party as the compelling reason for them quitting the party.

Asked whether he felt the resignations were a stage play (sandiwara) on the part of Keadilan as part of a possible hidden agenda by the party, Dr Mahathir said he would not want to pass such a judgment.

"We don't want to judge whether such and such incident is a sandiwara because we admit truths as being true and will call whatever false as being such."

The Prime Minister said Pas and Keadilan liked to accuse the Government of engaging in sandiwara over certain incidents for which they had no explanation.

"They allege the arms heist (by the Al-Ma'unah) was a sandiwara while other things (the group's other crimes) are not.

"But the fact is that the group stole the arms to commit murder. So they are speaking nonsense (karut)."

Dr Mahathir was also asked on reports that the opposition was exploiting the death of Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim's son as an election issue.

He said it indicated a lack of election issues among the opposition, which was willing to exploit a death in order to gain support.

"In our culture, we must show respect to our enemies even if they face death among their ranks.

"We don't say `serves you right,' but these people are saying that the tragedy happened because you are cruel (zalim)."

Dr Mahathir was also asked about a Bernama report today regarding a 17-year-old school student in Besut, Terengganu, who was arrested for being in possession of explosives and a nine mm bullet.

The report, quoting police, said initial investigations found that the student obtained the items after it was left behind by the boy's uncle, who is in the armed forces.

Dr Mahathir said he could not understand why even students now seem violent. He said it was possibly due to the teachings by some who were espousing such behaviour.

"This is not our culture. We are not a violent race, but there are people who are interested in bringing foreign cultures of violence into our country."

On the possibility of negligence being the cause of the explosives and firearms being taken out of an armed forces facility, Dr Mahathir said he did not know whether such was the case. He said he first needed to know what really happened.

The Prime Minister was also asked on a report in Mingguan Malaysia today, which quoted Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai as saying that police have information regarding four tonnes of explosives said to be hidden in the country.

The presence of the explosives was revealed on Friday via a statement from the Singapore Government. The statement said a group of suspected terrorists arrested in the republic last month had secured four tonnes of ammonium nitrate, a bomb-making material, from Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysian authorities would obtain more details about the matter from their Singaporean counterparts.

He said the matter fell primarily within the jurisdiction of the police and as such, he had yet to know about the latest developments.

Dr Mahathir had earlier visited various on-going projects in the island as part of his two-day visit to Langkawi, which ends today. He was accompanied by Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

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