

10 DEC 2002

Mahathir-Terrorism

MALAYSIA SAFE COUNTRY, SAYS DR M

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 6 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is a safe country as the government has taken action to check the terrorist threat earlier than other countries, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said when the government acted to detain those suspected to be involved in terrorism, many criticised the government as being undemocratic but now they were beginning to understand the government's action.

"Yes, indeed our country is safe...we do not deny that there are terrorists in Malaysia, but we have contained them much earlier than other countries," he told reporters at his Hari Raya open house at his official residence "Seri Perdana" here.

He was responding to reporters' questions on whether Malaysia was a safe country as certain quarters have doubted its security.

"When we arrested these people (suspected terrorists) and put them in detention, many said that we are undemocratic but now they understand that if we want to avoid terrorism, we have to take pre-emptive action to detain them," he said.

"Otherwise, if we wait until they (terrorists) explode the bomb, many people will die and at that time, it is too late," he said.

The Malaysian authorities have detained 67 members of Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM) since Oct 29, 2001 to thwart terrorists' activities in the country.

On claims that there were groups tarnishing Malaysia's image overseas by saying that the situation in the country was chaotic, Dr Mahathir said he did not know their intentions but their actions were detrimental to the country.

"I'm saddened with such fictional tales that were purposely being concocted to smear Malaysia's image while we do not do anything to run down other countries, he said.

On his message to non-Muslim world leaders, Dr Mahathir said: "Yes, we love peace. In fact, the word Islam has the same connotation (as peace), but unfortunately when Muslims are oppressed, they feel they have to fight back."

"So, if we want peace, we have to recognise that Muslims' land has been taken away from them and there is oppression of Muslims everywhere," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was important for Muslims and non-Muslims in the world to be more tolerant in order to have peace.

"It is very difficult for them to uphold peace when they are being oppressed. Both sides (Muslims and non-Muslims) must stop this anger and realise that in order to have peace, we have to be more tolerant," he said.

Dr Mahathir also reiterated that he would stick to his decision to resign by October next year.

"This is definitely my last (Hari Raya at Seri Perdana)," he said.

"No ambivalence. I'm very positive and definite," he said when asked about his feelings on the matter.

Dr Mahathir said he would not miss the Hari Raya atmosphere at Seri Perdana.

"I can come here as another guest for the Hari Raya and shake hands with the (new) Prime Minister.

"I have been here only for a short while and my home, the one where I am living is actually in Alor Star (Kedah). I also have one house at the

MINES (Malaysian International Exhibition Centre near Kuala Lumpur).

"Even now, I go back when I am free. This is too big a house for me. I am not used to living in a big house," he said.

Dr Mahathir described this year's Hari Raya Aidilfitri as a very bright Raya.

"People seem to be very happy and when I look around people seem to be well. Nobody is starving in this country. So, it is a great Raya," he said.

Nearly 100,000 people attended his open house.

-- BERNAMA

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