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Umno-Winding-Up (Rafidah)

DR MAHATHIR'S CRITICISM OF THE EUROPEANS WILL NOT AFFECT ECONOMY

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's criticism of the Europeans at the opening of the Umno general assembly will not affect Malaysia's economy, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said today.

She said that the prime minister and Umno president had asked her this morning whether his comments on the Europeans would affect the economy but she felt that it would not have any impact.

This, she said, was based on three factors, namely that what Dr Mahathir stated was a historical fact, that one had the right to voice one's opinions in a democracy and that the private sector in Europe based their business decisions on profits.

Rafidah, who is also Wanita Umno head, said this when winding up the debate on the motion on economy on the last day of the assembly here.

She said that as long as Malaysia was politically stable and the economic situation encouraging, European investors would continue to do business and invest in Malaysia.

"Take China for example. China is condemned by the United States, what has not been said about China by the United States, by its leaders for political reasons...but its private sector goes to China like ants scrambling for sugar," she said.

On Puteri Umno's proposal that Malaysia spearhead efforts to promote the halal standard in the world food industry, she said that the cabinet had approved strategies to make Malaysia a regional centre to develop halal products.

One of the strategies was to make the Malaysian Islamic Advancement Department (Jakim) the sole body to issue the halal certification.

She said her ministry would also ensure that the products met international standards.

Rafidah ended her speech by apologising to Dr Mahathir for forcing him to stop his winding-up speech mid-way at last year's assembly when he announced his resignation.

In a choked voice, she said that she might have acted rudely but she could not control her emotion then because she, Umno members and the people were not ready to accept Dr Mahathir's resignation from the party and government.

She also pledged support to Deputy Prime Minister and deputy Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who will succeed Dr Mahathir.

-- BERNAMA

NM KHY RON JK