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Mahathir-Photo

MAHATHIR CRITICISES MEDIA COVERAGE OF MCA TRIAD ISSUE

PUTRAJAYA, July 24 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today criticised the media coverage on the issue of triads in MCA, especially the use of old pictures of MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting together with an individual who is said to be involved in such activities.

Old pictures of Ong together with Persiaran Gurney MCA branch chairman Ong King Ee, who is now wanted by police on suspicion of involvement in secret society activities, were published in an English language afternoon tabloid recently with a banner headline "Wanted TRIAD BOSS".

"It is not being fair. You take a picture that was an old picture and then, when you say 'Wanted', put the picture with the MCA president, is that fair?"

"Surely it's not the MCA president who is 'Wanted'. Journalists must have some ethics also," the Prime Minister told reporters after attending the Children's Day celebration, organised by the Welfare Body of Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers (Bakti), at Seri Perdana here.

Dr Mahathir was asked whether he was concerned over allegations of elements of triads in the MCA.

"Why take an old picture and show as if he (Ka Ting) just met him (King Ee). Then ask if he knows him?"

"Surely he knows him, now he knows him. He recognises the person, whether or not he knew that that person was a criminal, that's another matter," Dr Mahathir said.

"I have also been photographed with people whom I don't know sitting beside me, maybe Umno members," he said, adding that it was only after they were exposed as criminals would he know.

"If I knew someone and 10 years later, he is found to be a criminal, you take that old photograph of us together and portray me as being friendly with a criminal, is this fair?", he said.

The Prime Minister was also asked about the payment to contractors involved in building computer laboratories in schools in the East Coast following the government's decision to terminate the services of Bell Grand Sdn Bhd, the main contractor of the project.

He said everything would be worked out and the Government would do so by following the existing rules.

Asked whether the contractors would be taken to court, Dr Mahathir said: "Well, if it is necessary, if it is criminal. But if it is negligence, it is very difficult for us to prove."

The construction of the laboratories has been bogged down by delays and some of the laboratories have been detected to have faulty structures.

On reports that the management of a resort in Bukit Tinggi had closed the operation of its slot machines, Dr Mahathir said that there was never a casino there as claimed by some parties.

"In the clubs we allow one-arm bandits (slot machines). But one-arm bandits have become sophisticated and some use electronic machines for other games. Now we ban these.

"We want to allow only one-arm bandits and it applies to other clubs, not only the one there (Bukit Tinggi). There's no casino," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MAM JK SRI