

24 APR 2003

Abdullah-Economist

NOBODY CAN DISMISS PROGRESS BROUGHT ABOUT BY PM, SAYS ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, April 24 (Bernama) -- Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today that nobody including the Western media could dismiss the progress and successes achieved by Malaysia under the leadership of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Abdullah said that under the prime minister, Malaysia emerged as a country which was prosperous, progressive and harmonious and a nation which was respected and held in high esteem.

He said this in a statement following the publication of an article on the change of leadership in Malaysia in the April 5 edition of "The Economist" which among others, contains strong attacks against the leadership of Dr Mahathir.

Abdullah said that the article gave a negative picture of the country's development and progress under the prime minister.

"It is obvious from the article that the writer and the magazine have ill will against the country's leadership," he said.

Abdullah said that the progress and successes achieved by Malaysia under Dr Mahathir were obvious and in fact acknowledged within the country and in the international arena.

"Nobody, including the Western media, can dismiss this fact," he said in the four-paragraph statement.

According to the acting prime minister, the article must not be wrongly interpreted or exploited by any parties.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who is Umno vice president, also ticked off the writer of the article, Christopher Lockwood, for not giving an accurate and true picture of the country's leadership and the government's policies.

He also expressed regret that Lockwood had made personal attacks against Dr Mahathir.

The article concluded, under a sub-heading "A Qualified Success", that: "The greatest service Dr Mahathir could render Malaysia after all these years would be to retire, full stop."

The article also states that: "Installing Dr Mahathir in Jeddah where the OIC is based, would have another great advantage, for Malaysia at least; it would get him out of the country."

"Will he (Abdullah, when he takes over) be able to dispense with the authoritarianism that to many, has made Dr Mahathir look more than a jailer than guardian of his people."

Issues touched in the article included race relations, the New Economic Policy, the Internal Security Act (ISA), expenditure on mega projects, the PAS threat and the capability of Umno and the Barisan Nasional.

He said that comparisons were made in the article between Dr Mahathir and Abdullah, which could create misunderstanding over the power change process in October.

"It must be stressed that leaders have their own style and the fact that Dr Mahathir has named Abdullah as his successor showed that he and the party are confident of Abdullah's capability to carry out the job," he said.

Najib said that the article was not balanced, failing to take into account the huge successes and accomplishments of Dr Mahathir in developing Malaysia into a progressive Islamic nation.

He said that other issues raised in the article were also biased,

frequently highlighted by the opposition, with the views of the government sidelined.

Asked on the action that may be taken by Umno over the article, Najib said that the party could propose that the government ban the distribution of the magazine, published in London.

However, he said, it was essential that the government express an appropriate view of Malaysia's achievements and the country's stand.

-- BERNAMA

MRA MAM AHH RM