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PM: Abdullah can handle it (HL)

Firdaus Abdullah

PUTRAJAYA, Mon. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is confident Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will weather the stress when he takes over as Prime Minister on Friday.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia under his successor would be able to maintain its independence and strong resolve against the many "attacks" on the nation.

"I think our country can weather quite a lot of stresses. In the past, they did that (imposed all kinds of pressure). They have tried to kill us economically. They robbed us of our money. They tried to impoverish us, but we managed and we will continue to manage.

"I'm quite sure my successor will be able to do the same," Dr Mahathir said at a Press conference at the Finance Ministry this morning after presenting excellent service awards to the staff.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said Abdullah would be able to handle threats to Malaysia in his own way.

Responding to a question by a foreign wire agency reporter who wanted to know if the Prime Minister was worried that his legacy of economic development might be overshadowed by his recent remarks about Jews and that Malaysia might be considered an anti-Semitic country, he said:

"Oh yes. We are dealing with anti-Muslim people. They can be anti-Muslim, but we cannot even say one word about the Jews without being accused of being anti-Semitic.

"There is no concept of anti-Semitism among the Muslims. In fact, when the Europeans were massacring Jews, the Jews ran to Muslim countries. We have no quarrel with the Jews," he reiterated, adding that Muslims were free to express their anger against their oppressors.

It was only natural for Muslims to be angry with Jews who killed Muslims after robbing them of land, farms and homes.

"When you take Muslim land and give it to the Jews to create the state of Israel, then of course you cause a lot of anger among the Muslims. Are we not allowed to say that we are angry? Are we not allowed to say that we are angry with the Jews? Are the Jews some kind of creatures who cannot be condemned in any way?.

"I am not saying this because I'm anti-Semitic. The Arabs are also Semitic people and I know a lot of Jews ...I'm not against them, but I am against these Jews who kill Muslims and the Jews who support the killers of Muslims ...I cannot say that? I mean, if I say there is a Chinese businessman who cheated a Malay, does it mean I'm condemning all the Chinese," Dr Mahathir asked.

The Prime Minister said he had many good European friends, but he would not be agreeing with them even if they did or said something that was clearly wrong.

"When they do something wrong, I am going to tell them it is wrong. You say you're not under the influence of the Jews yet when I criticise the Jews, the whole of the European Union wants to condemn me. But when somebody condemns the Muslims and call my Prophet a terrorist and all that, did the EU say anything? This shows that they (some Europeans) are under the thumb of the Jews," he said.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said fellow Muslim leaders had been relatively quiet on attacks directed against him by the Jews because they were afraid of similar action against them or their nation.

"They may have more money but they are too dependent upon the Europeans and because of that are reluctant to make their voices heard. But privately they will support us," he said, playing down criticism of Muslim leaders who had failed to defend Malaysia and Dr Mahathir, though the so-called anti-Semitic speech was delivered during the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Summit here two weeks ago.

Also present at the function were Second Finance Minister Datuk Dr Jamaludin Jarjis, Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Ng Yen Yen and Ministry secretary-general Tan Sri Samsudin Hitam.

Earlier, addressing recipients of the awards, Dr Mahathir urged them to render their support and full co-operation to Abdullah, adding that they would be serving the nation and not a particular individual.

He also reiterated that he would not be playing any active role in Government after his retirement.