

PM says it again: We are committed to rule of law

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad once again states that Pakatan Harapan is committed to the rule of law to ensure that everyone is equal in the eyes of the law and to uphold the Federal Constitution.

"We want to accept the rule of law. For us, we abide by it even though there are derails, etc," said Dr Mahathir.

Pakatan, he said, is holding fast to the rule of law, unlike the previous Barisan Nasional government, which he accused of "never even bothered about the rule of law".

"They (Barisan government) wants to arrest somebody, they arrest," said Dr Mahathir.

He said it is important that all Malaysians understand that Malaysia is a parliamentary democracy, under which the Constitution is the highest authority and no one can claim to be above it.

The Prime Minister, however, lamented that there is reluctance from all tiers of the government and authorities to apply the law consistently across the board for all Malaysians.

"This is a big problem. Although we are a parliamentary democracy,

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some of the people who run the government are quite feudal in their way of thinking. They cannot say no.

"Even though something is wrong, something is suggested to them which is wrong, which is against the law, but they would still do it so that they don't go against the higher authorities," said Dr Mahathir.

The government's recent withdrawal from ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court still weighs on the Prime Minister's mind as he felt that he had been unjustly "blackened".

"Part of the task I am undertaking is to solve the failure to follow the Constitution but, of course, I have been blackened by other things such as (what was) done on Rome Statute. So that I would not be influential, (and) so that I can be overthrown. This is ongoing.

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Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

"We should actually take action over such things but there again, we have a problem of implementation because the agencies of the government are often reluctant to do anything. They look the other way.

"I was upset because this is the first time somebody tried to make use of the Rulers in order to frustrate the government. That is very wrong. If they have any problems, they can ask us. We can explain what the Rome Statute is all about. Instead, they somehow managed to have a meeting not consistent with the Constitution.

"They gave a wrong explanation about Rome Statute and they managed to influence people. We need-

ed to ensure that the people continued to support us. For the time being, we had to do away with the Rome Statute.

"Eventually, we have to tell the people that this is not doing away with our Constitution. Our Constitution and laws remain. It is only when we fail to apply the laws or we cannot apply the laws, then, if there is a very serious thing like there is a mass murder or mass jailing of people, then the International Criminal Court (ICC) can intervene," said Dr Mahathir.

On the issue of naming the new Chief Justice to replace Tan Sri Richard Malanjum who had retired, Dr Mahathir said at the moment, he had yet to receive any confirmation on the candidacy.

"I always imagined that the King is the person who must approve all senior appointments but somehow or rather, there is the reference to the Conference of Rulers.

"Now, it is not just the King but it also has to go to the Rulers. I don't know what it means. The decision made cannot be altered unless there is a valid reason. We have made a decision (on the name of the Chief Justice) and sent it to the

King," he said.

He also talked about how those who claim to be religious have misled their followers merely to expedite their political agenda.

"I am not a moderate Muslim. A Muslim must be moderate. If you follow the teachings of the Quran. Everything advised is good but we do not follow what the religion says to do but you still say this is from religion and abuse the religion.

"For example, a party calls the other party kafir (apostate) but you cannot do that because you are not allowed to condemn any group as an apostate unless there is clear evidence he is praying to some image or things forbidden by religion," said Dr Mahathir in obvious reference to Islamist party PAS, which had in the past, condemned Umno as kafir.

"What we try to do is explain what the religion really says. And what they are doing is not religion.

"We are dealing not with real Islam but the abusers of the religion to bolster their popularity, especially people who do not know enough about religion to reject the wrong thing they have done," said Dr Mahathir.