

Mahathir explains civil servants' loyalty to government

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PUTRAJAYA, Aug 15 (Bernama) -- The loyalty of civil servants such as administrative and diplomatic officers and police and military personnel to the government should not be up to the point of complying with directives contrary to the law, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

If government officers found that the task entrusted to them was clearly wrong or criminal in nature, they should not comply with the instruction, he said.

"You don't have to follow all orders, just those that come in accordance with government policies," he said at a town hall session for about 3,500 administrative and diplomatic officers (PTD) here today. The session was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Cabinet ministers and the Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa.

"If, as the Prime Minister, I order you to kill someone, would you do it? There's a difference between an instruction in accordance with certain policies and an order to commit a crime," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was wrong if a government officer received an instruction to commit a crime, such as the concealing of criminal evidence.

Dr Mahathir said government officers should strictly ignore improper directives such as campaigning for political parties despite being threatened with action.

"If you all say no, don't tell me all of you will be punished?" he said.

Asked whether the government would come to the aid of civil servants who had been subjected to action for not abiding by the directives of the previous administration, he said the government was prepared to discuss and restore them to their positions.

Dr Mahathir said he had to look into the reports first to ensure that those who were actually victimised could be given a reprieve, while also taking into account the financial position of the government.

“Some have been given a reprieve, but the total number is too big, and some may have been missed out by our investigation.

“If they were (missed out), please provide details why they were ‘punished’ earlier and the government will restore them to their previous position or pay what is owed to them,” he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that in the effort to fighting wrong, the government officers must accept the fact that they would be ‘punished’ but they should believe that what they did would eventually bring good.

Acknowledging that he himself was ‘punished’ by the previous administration, including by stopping his monthly allowance and putting fear into his friends to keep them away from him, Dr Mahathir said these were challenges that must be faced in championing what was right.

“If I were to have gone along with them even after being ‘punished’, what would have happened to the country and our society? So, we have to accept ‘punishment’ for our refusal to do what’s wrong,” he said.

On the other questions and grievances on governance aired at the session, the Prime Minister said he would study, have discussions and seek evidence before making any

decision.

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