

PM: No plans to amend law on by-election

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PORT KLANG, Sun. — The Government has no plans to amend the law to prevent uncalled for by-elections, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Asked by newsmen after he had opened the Port Klang Authority's Silver Jubilee and Open Day celebrations here whether the Government would consider such a move, he said firmly, "No, no."

He stressed that the Government would continue to abide by the Federal Constitution and the 1958 Election Act provisions on by-elections.

Article 54 of the Constitution calls for a vacancy in the Dewan Rakyat or the Dewan Negara to be filled within 60 days.

The Act spells out that a by-election will be held as a result of the death or resignation of an MP or a State Assemblyman or his loss of membership or disqualification from his office when he commits one of the six offences listed under Article 48 of the Constitution, including being declared insane or bankrupt.

Speculation

Dr Mahathir was commenting on the Aug 29 *Asian Wall Street Journal* report quoting political observers on the likelihood of the Government amending the law to eliminate the 60-day rule on parliamentary and State vacancies.

The paper said it was possible that Malaysia might follow Singapore's move to leave vacant parliamentary seats until the next general election.

The speculation by the ASWJ came after comments by several Barisan Nasional leaders during the recent Johore Baru by-election that they were considering means to prevent politically motivated by-elections.

The newspaper quoted Dr Mahathir as one of those Barisan Nasional leaders who allegedly made such a suggestion but the Prime Minister denied this today.

Local Press reports quoted Dr Mahathir as saying in one of his speeches during the Johore Baru by-election ceremonies that "a by-election should be held when a member (of Parliament) is ill, incapacitated or dead.

"It should not be held out of anger towards me or my leadership," he said, referring to Independent Datuk Shahrir Samad who retained the Johore Baru parliamentary seat on Aug 25.