

Musa's claims baseless, says Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today dismissed as "entirely baseless" the claim by Datuk Musa Hitam that he intends to call a snap general election within a year.

The Prime Minister also said the claim that he would create trouble in the country as an excuse for emergency to be declared if the polls went against him was without basis and totally false.

Datuk Musa, the MP for Kota Tinggi, had made these claims in his speech at the Foreign Correspondents Club in Hong Kong on Wednesday.

Dr Mahathir, speaking to reporters after chairing a five-hour meeting of the Umno Baru supreme council at the Putra World Trade Centre, said: "We discussed the statement today and agreed it was false, mischievous and designed to destabilise the country."

Asked whether any action will be taken against Datuk Musa, Dr Mahathir said: "We are a democratic

country where anyone can voice his personal views. There will be no action against him . . . but we regret that there are people who cannot put the interest of the country above everything else. He (Datuk Musa) is prepared to give an inaccurate picture of the situation in the country to the extent that it could affect the investment climate here."

The Umno Baru president said the claim that a snap election would be called any time within a year would create uneasiness among investors and businessmen for a whole year.

"It does not help to promote economic activity," Dr Mahathir added.

He said Datuk Musa's statement on the MCA was also "baseless" as the MCA had said it had no intention of pulling out of the Barisan Nasional.

"The claim about the MCA destabilises the country's politics," the Prime Minister said, adding that responsible people would

not make such statements.

Dr Mahathir said such a statement would affect the economy and destabilise the country.

In Batu Pahat, Datuk Musa said he stood by his statement to Foreign Correspondents Club in Hong Kong that a snap general election was likely.

Datuk Musa confirmed that he said there was a major possibility Dr Mahathir Mohamad would call for the snap elections.

"I had also said that there was a major possibility that Dr Mahathir will declare a state of emergency if there are indications he will lose," he said.

Datuk Musa also said he also made the statement regarding MCA not agreeing to the snap election.

Confirming that he did make the speech as reported in the Press, Datuk Musa said that he did not wish to carry out a dialogue with the Press or in Parliament over the matter because the media will not report it.

"What I have said is nor-

mal political speculation

. . . I have received information which showed that this is very likely. To me, if this does not happen, fine, thanks . . . as this is to his (Dr Mahathir's) credit and if it happens, I am right," he told reporters after giving a ceramah at Kampung Seri Dalam, Parit Raja.

Datuk Musa added that if what he had said was not correct there was nothing for which he need apologise.

On his statement being described as *derhaka* (treachery) by some, Datuk Musa said that what he had stated should not be construed as treachery.

Datuk Musa also said that the allegation that he only had the courage to speak outside the country was not true because his speeches went unreported locally.

"I spoke in order to give a picture of what I thought was correct and this does not mean I am sabotaging," Datuk Musa said.