

PM: Don't reward de Klerk just yet

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat — Malaysia does not share the assessment of some Western nations that South African President F.W. de Klerk has to be rewarded at this stage for the reforms he has initiated, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

"I believe it is important that we maintain the momentum of developments in South Africa. All parties concerned should exert every effort to ensure a successful outcome to the ongoing negotiations between the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Government."

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a dinner hosted by the Barisan Nasional in honour of ANC deputy president Nelson Mandela at the Putra World Trade Centre.

He was referring to developments in South Africa since Mr de Klerk came into power, such as the release of Mr Mandela from prison, the release of other political prisoners, the lifting of a ban on the ANC and other anti-apartheid groups, and the lifting of the state of emergency in

the various provinces of South Africa, including in Natal, recently.

He said that as a member of the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa (CFMSA), Malaysia had been closely monitoring developments in South Africa.

"The committee has had the benefit of Mr Mandela's presence and his assessment of the situation in South Africa when the committee met in Abuja, Ni-

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geria, in mid-May this year. We will continue to be guided by his perception."

However, Dr Mahathir said, Malaysia was deeply concerned over armed clashes between various anti-apartheid groups in South Africa during the past few months which had resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives.

"I fear that this inter-factional violence, if allowed to continue, can undermine the progress made thus far towards dismantling apartheid.

"But I am sure that this problem is uppermost in Mr Mandela's mind and that he will exert every effort and influence to contain it."

Dr Mahathir said Mr Mandela's presence in Malaysia brought home the realisation to many Malaysians that democracy should not be taken for granted by countries which had gained independence.

Referring to the recent general election, Dr Mahathir said the results showed that Malaysians were grateful that in spite of the various racial, ethnic and religious differences between them, they were able to exercise unhampered political freedom for the last 33 years.

He said Barisan Nasional leaders prayed that the people of South Africa would also be able to enjoy the right to vote, free from violence, in the near future.

"Malaysians will be among the first to rejoice on the day when you and each and every South African, irrespective of the colour of his skin, are able to determine South Africa's future through the ballot box."