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MAHATHIR SALUTES ELYAS' MOVE TO RESIGN

Mahathir - Elyas

from Ahmad Zukiman Zain (Y)

JAKARTA, Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today saluted the decision of Tan Sri Elyas Omar to resign as the Kuala Lumpur Datuk Bandar on account of allegations against City Hall, saying such a thing rarely happened in Malaysia.

+I take my hat off to him,+ he said at a dialogue with Malaysian students in Indonesia at the Asean Secretariat here.

Dr Mahathir, replying to questions on government measures to prevent leakage of secrets, said not many people in Malaysia were prepared to emulate Elyas' example to resign by citing accountability.

However, he said, he was still considering the matter after learning from the media of Elyas' announced intention to resign as of Sept 17.

Elyas announced on Tuesday night his decision to resign following allegations of irregularities in City Hall's purchase of 23 Volvo cars and handphones for its heads of department and a visit to Casablanca by a City Hall delegation, at a total cost of \$4.5 million. -- more

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Mahathir - Elyas 2 Jakarta

Dr Mahathir said it was difficult for the government to ensure that classified information did not leak out because the civil service was large, with almost 900,000 officers and staff.

+It is difficult to safeguard secrets, like trying to grasp flour...it will run between the fingers,+ he said.

He said that while the government was against leakage of secrets, it did not also agree to irregularities.

+It is important that we adhere to values and not indulge in such matters,+ he said.

In the meeting for almost an hour with the students, Dr Mahathir said they were fortunate to have the opportunity to study overseas and hoped that on their return they would help Malaysia attain its objectives under Vision 2020. -- more

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Dr Mahathir, who was accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, is here to attend the ongoing Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit.

He also answered various questions from the students on scholarships, the Penans issue, the proposed East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) and claims by countries to the Spratlys. -- Bernama

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