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PM SAYS PAIRIN SUGGESTING COUNTRY SPLIT LIKE PAKISTAN

Mahathir - PBS (Pix)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 17 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Sabah chief minister Datuk Pairin Kitingan's suggestion that Malaysia be divided into east and west would create a situation similar to the time when Bangladesh was East Pakistan.

Pairin had suggested that Sabah and Sarawak be referred to as East Malaysia and Peninsular Malaysia as West Malaysia.

+ He (Pairin) wants a Bangladesh created as he (Pairin) knows Bangladesh's history, + Dr Mahathir told reporters here on arrival from a one-day visit to Tawau, Sabah.

Prior to 1971, Bangladesh was part of Pakistan known as East Pakistan which later claimed independence from the Pakistani government.

A subsequent nine-month war of independence resulted in the birth of Bangladesh.-- more

▼17/09/14-45MST

CNS3179

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Mahathir - PBS 2 Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, said his Tawau trip showed that Sabah people now strongly backed the coalition.

As other fellow Malaysians, Sabahans too aspired for a peaceful and progressive life, he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said the party was well-received by Sabah people and so far some 250,000 are Umno members.

He was confident that Umno would continue flourishing if there were no disruptions and instigations against it by certain parties.

On PBS' claims that Umno recruited illegal immigrants as members by giving them Malaysian identity cards, Dr Mahathir said Umno suspected that it was the PBS which was doing such thing for their own ends.-- more

▼17/09/14-47MST

CNS3193

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Mahathir - PBS 3 (last) Kuala Lumpur

Tamparuli state assemblyman and PBS youth chief PBS Datuk Wilfred Bumburing had alleged that certain parties were helping illegal immigrants get Malaysian identity card to register as voters and join Umno.

Dr Mahathir also said his five-day official visit to Ireland from Sept 22 marks the establishment of government-to-government links with that country.

The move was because of the increasing number of Malaysian students in Ireland taking up medical studies in particular.

The Irish government had been treating Malaysian students well and was in fact willing to take in more of them compared with Britain, he said.

Dr Mahathir's visit, the first by a Malaysian head of government, is at the invitation of his Irish counterpart Albert Reynolds.-- Bernama

▼17/09/15-01MST