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Mahathir-Mustapha (with pix)

GOVT MAY AMEND CONSTITUTION TO ENABLE MUSTAPHA KEEP USUKAN SEAT

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KUALA LUMPUR, May 25 (Bernama) -- The government will consider the possibility of amending the Federal Constitution to enable Tun Datu Mustapha Harun, who had been appointed Minister for Sabah Affairs, to retain his Usukan state seat, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

This was one of several options being considered by the government to ensure that Mustapha did not have to vacate his seat, he said.

The matter had been discussed with Deputy Prime Minister Encik Ghafar Baba, who is chairman of the Sabah Umno Liaison Committee, he told reporters at the airport on his return from Seoul where he had addressed a forum organised by the Pacific Basin Economic Council, the largest association of business leaders in the Asia-Pacific region.

Dr Mahathir declined to reveal the other options being considered by the government so as to alleviate the need for a by-election in Usukan.

However, he said, if it was inevitable, a by-election would be held. -- more

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▼25/05/17-30MST

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Mahathir-Mustapha 2 Kuala Lumpur

"If it is necessary to vacate the seat, we will do so...if there is no necessity, we will not do so," Dr Mahathir said.

Article 43 (8) of the Federal Constitution provides for a state assemblyman appointed a minister to cease to be a member of the assembly before taking up office as minister.

Mustapha, who is MP for Limbawang and Sabah Umno deputy chairman, had reportedly said he was prepared to vacate his Usukan seat.

Two years ago, he had to vacate the seat when he left Usno, which he founded in 1961, to join Umno.

Dr Mahathir said it was not necessary for Mustapha to vacate his seat now because he had yet to take his oath of office as minister. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said the date for Mustapha to take his oath of office had yet to be decided.

Asked about the elections in Cambodia, Dr Mahathir said he was happy to see many Cambodians interested in democracy. Sixty per cent of the 4.7 million voters had cast their ballots by the second day of the elections.

"They want to have an administration through the electoral process, and I congratulate them on their boldness in fulfilling their duty as citizens of a democratic nation despite being under the threat of the Khmer Rouge," he said.

On his two-day visit to South Korea, Dr Mahathir said he took advantage of the PBEC forum to explain the concept of the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC). -- more

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Dr Mahathir also had talks with South Korean President Kim Young-sam and Philippine President Fidel Ramos who had also addressed the forum.

On his meeting with Kim, he said "we discussed international issues...there are differences in the foreign policy of President Kim and former President Roh (Tae-woo)". -- Bernama

ES AHH MGN

▼25/05/19-07MST