

Dr M: Peaceful polls hold hope for Cambodia

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ALOR STAR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the peaceful elections in Cambodia held a lot of promise and hope for the war-torn nation.

Expressing relief at the non-violent UN-organised elections, he said the over 90 per cent voter turnout was a very good sign for democracy in Cambodia.

Dr Mahathir said that with the peaceful election, most Cambodians would not dispute the outcome.

"According to reports, there were no riots and no sabotage by the Khmer Rouge. This means the majority of Cambodians can accept the results,"

Dr Mahathir told newsmen at his Hari Raya Haji open-house at Titi Gajah here.

He said Malaysia would recognise the election results irrespective of which faction clinched victory.

More than a million Cambodians went to the polls on Sunday to elect their first internationally recognised government in decades without the feared intervention of the Khmer Rouge.

A new 120-member national assembly would ratify a constitution and form a government within three months.

Over 850,000 ballots of the 4.2 million votes cast

had been counted so far, with the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) taking 44 per cent.

On the start of exploratory talks in Manila yesterday between the six Asian nations claiming the Spratly Islands, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would continue to strive for a peaceful settlement.

He said Malaysia's stand was that the dispute should be resolved using historical, traditional or legal principles, whichever was agreed.

The potentially oil-laden area in the South China Sea is being claimed by China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei.