

# Dr M: Ban on rallies may be lifted if police agree

**By Farush Khan**

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The Government will consider lifting the ban on public rallies before the next general election, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

A decision, however, will depend on reports and proposals from the police.

"Those looking after the (country's) security know better. If they are of the opinion that it can be lifted, then they will make the de-

cision," he told reporters after opening the Sapura-Nokia Telecommunications and Sapura Electronics Industries factories in Wangsa Maju, Setapak, here.

Dr Mahathir was responding to reporters who asked him to comment on the statement by Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor that the police were studying the possible impact on security and public order should the ban be lifted before the general election.

Rahim had said yesterday that any decision made by the police on the ban, which was imposed following racial clashes on May 13, 1969, would be referred to the Government.

Asked whether he was in favour of lifting the ban, Dr Mahathir said: "I am open."

When asked whether it was appropriate to have the ban lifted if the situation in the country was found to be stable and peaceful, he said it would depend on how public rallies were con-

trolled.

"When there are too many people, it is sometimes difficult to control," he said, adding that in view of that, the organisers of such rallies must know how to manage the crowd.

Asked about a letter sent to him by DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang, who expressed the hope that the general election would be the "most free, fair and clean in Malaysian history", Dr Mahathir said he had replied to the letter, telling

Lim that that had always been the case.

"There were no elections where we (the Government) had cheated. I myself had lost (before)," he said, adding that being a candidate of the ruling party, he should have won in every election if the Government was out to cheat.

(Dr Mahathir lost to Yusof Rawa of the then PMIP (now Pas) in the Kota Star parliamentary seat by 989 votes in the 1969 general election).

He pointed out that the Opposition too continued to

win seats in elections.

"Even Kit Siang won although I think he should not have won. That is how democratic and fair elections are in Malaysia," he said.

Asked why he felt Lim should not have won, the Prime Minister said Lim had never been constructive and ever since he sat in the Dewan Rakyat, he merely "criticised, ran others down and used abusive words".

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