

*Mahathir*

# Dr M: MPs and Assemblymen can do

**Reports by Saiful Azhar Abdullah, Zubaidah Abu Bakar and Sharanjit Singh**

JITRA, Sat. -- The Government will not prevent MPs and State Assemblymen from being involved in small and part-time businesses because "their allowances as elected representatives are not much", Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

However, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and Political Secretaries are not allowed to do so, the Prime Minister said, adding that this was because they hold positions and have certain powers in

Government.

Dr Mahathir said the Government did not want Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and Political Secretaries abusing their powers for personal interest.

As for the MPs and State Assemblymen, the most they could do is to deliver speeches in Parliament and State Assemblies, meaning that their power are restricted, he said.

The Prime Minister said this when asked by reporters to comment on suggestions that elected representatives adhere to their duties and not get involved in business as this could lead them neglecting their duties to their constituents.

Seminars and forums held

at some universities came to the conclusion that elected representatives should concentrate on their work and not get involved in business.

The Prime Minister said: "Why must we stop them from doing business? Their allowances are not much and people keep asking them for all sorts of financial assistance and donations. Some ask for jerseys, balls..this and that..."

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters at the official residence of Kubang Pasu district officer after a meet-the-people gathering at Sekolah Menengah Hosba here.

The Prime Minister said the suggestion could be accepted provided that the elected representatives en-

joy a handsome pay.

He then cited the salaries enjoyed by Singapore ministers, which enable them to have a different lifestyle.

The Prime Minister of Singapore is paid S\$130,000, which is equivalent to RM200,000 a month, he said.

Dr Mahathir stressed the elected representatives' involvement in businesses should only be on a small and part-time basis.

"Therefore, there is no reason why they could not visit their constituencies," he added.

Asked to comment on talks that certain elected representatives spend too much time on business instead of taking care of their constituencies, Dr Mahathir said:

"It's the same with some lecturers from universities. Some of them indulge in business and earn side incomes. It's the same...we should not find people's fault alone, we must look at ourselves too."

Asked to elaborate on his speech at the gathering on the possible general election, Dr Mahathir said the election could be held anytime.

"It can be held anytime...from now until the end of the Parliamentary term," he said.

However, he added that "if the indicator shows it should be held soon, then it should held soon...If the indicator shows it should be held later, then it will be later."

## business part-time

Asked to elaborate on what he would consider a favourable situation for an election to be held, Dr Mahathir said a favourable situation could be anything.

"If we want to consider a favourable situation, this year is favourable, last year was also favourable.

"The thing is we have time to decide when to hold the election. If we hold the election too frequently, every three years or three-and-half years, it will consume a lot of funds.

"It means that we're spending a lot of the people's money. We cannot do it frequently. This is not a game, it is a serious matter," he added.

Asked whether it was healthy to allow the people

to continue guessing on the election date, Dr Mahathir said:

"The people should not think about the election. Let the political parties do the thinking. The people should continue with their lives."

On whether the Government was waiting to ensure that the Barisan Nasional was at its strongest before calling for the election, the Prime Minister said the coalition now is stronger than in the 1990 election.

He said in that election, the BN were facing problems caused by the Umno splinter party. Some people then also believed that the coalition of opposition parties would adversely affect the BN.

"But this time, their co-

operation has loosened although Pas and DAP are still co-operating discreetly," he added.

Asked to comment on claims by leaders of Pas and Parti Melayu Seimbang 46 that the Government was afraid to hold the election now because the opposition was strong, Dr Mahathir: "They can say whatever they want. It is up to them."

On Pas' claim that the recent budget was an election budget, Dr Mahathir said the Government had always reduced tax in its budget.

"It is our duty. It is true that it is an election budget... after this we cannot table a new budget next year as the term of Parliament expires," he added in a lighter vein.