

30 DEC 1996

Mahathir-Ambassador

MAHATHIR HAPPY WITH MOKHTAR SELAT'S RELEASE

SHAH ALAM, Dec 30 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is happy with the release of Malaysian ambassador to Peru Ahmad Mokhtar Selat yesterday after 12 days in captivity by Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement guerillas at the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima.

"I'm very happy for him. It's been a trying time for him and for us also," he told reporters here after rolling out the one millionth Proton car at the Proton plant, here, today.

He said although the government felt the need to do something (to secure Mokhtar's release), at the same time it did not want to be seen to be pressuring the Peruvian government.

"I think they (Peruvian government) have done very well," he said.

Ahmad Mokhtar was among the latest group of 20 hostages freed yesterday by the guerillas who seized the Japanese ambassador's residence and took captive hundreds of people attending a reception on Dec 17.

Asked about the Sabah and Sarawak governments requestes to extend the deadline for renewing the identity card, Dr Mahathir said he would study the requests.

The two state governments had asked for the extension as the people there had difficulty renewing their ICs due to geographic factors.

Dr Mahathir said that even if the deadline was extended there would still be people who would delay getting their ICs renewed. -- BERNAMA

RAZ JK