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Court decision a warning on money politics

THE Prime Minister said the court decision in declaring null and void the election for the Bukit Begunan seat in Sarawak is a warning that "money politics' does not pay.

"We do not condone the use of money in politics, even in our own party (Umno)," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He was asked to comment on the result of the September 8 and 9 election last year for the Bukit Begunan state seat in Sarawak being declared invalid by the court two days ago because of the use of money to influence voters.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan Nasional would agree if it was true that money was indeed used in the election. "I do not know yet whether we (BN) are appealing or not but if we should appeal, it is due to our belief that there was no money involved in that election," he said.

In his judgment on February 13, Tawau-based judge Ian Chin ruled that he was convinced beyond reasonable doubt that a sizeable number of people had been bribed in the election where the Barisan Nasional candidate from Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak's Mong Anak Dagang beat independent candidate Donald Lawan.

Asked if it was true that Umno was planning to spread its wings to Sarawak, the Prime Minister said Umno would only expand to Sarawak when the people in the state wants the party to do so.

"And when I say that, I mean the majority of the Bumiputeras there, not just a few people, making all kinds of predictions and rumours...those we do not take into consideration," he said. "We have no plans (to go to Sarawak) by the year 2000 or 2020 or whatever."

On the duplication of federal and state laws on the protection of the environment, Dr Mahathir said the Federal Government is empowered to check on state governments abusing their power and going against policies and laws of the Federal Government.

Dr Mahathir said he was not unduly worried about state governments abusing their power by acting in contravention of federal policies and laws as there are cordial working relationships between federal and state governments.

He was asked to comment on the decision by the Court of Appeal in Kuala Lumpur in the Bakun case yesterday that the Environmental Quality Act does not apply to Sarawak.

Dr Mahathir also said that on natural resources in Sabah, particularly timber, there are federal and state laws and that both seem applicable in the state.

He said it needs a third party to study the matter before it can be known whether there is duplication of power in the implementation of Government policies.

On the smuggling of logs reported in Sabah recently, the Prime Minister said he is still awaiting reports from the police and the Anti-Corruption Agency. He said the reports will determine whether the matter is serious or otherwise.

Last month, the State Forestry Department seized 3,049 logs worth about RM6 million in Tawau on suspicion that it was to be smuggled to Japan. The Primary Industries Ministry and State Forestry Department had claimed jurisdiction to the issuance of licence to export logs from Sabah.

Asked to comment on the Kelantan State Assembly's rejection of six

questions submitted by BN assemblymen concerning the Kota Baru Municipal Council, Dr Mahathir said, "If the questions rejected are not relevant, we will not complain.

"But if the questions are concerning the state's administration, it shows that it (Kelantan Government) is afraid (to answer) and is hiding something," he said.

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