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Dr M: Court decision is a warning money politics does not pay

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KOTA KINABALU, Tues. - The Prime Minister today said the court decision in declaring null and void the election for the Bukit Begunan seat in Sarawak was 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.

He was asked to comment on the Sept 8 and 9 election results for the Bukit Begunan State seat which were declared invalid by the court two days ago because money was used to influence voters.

"I do not know yet whether we (BN) are appealing or not but if we should appeal, it will be due to our belief that there was no money involved in that election," he said.

In his judgment on Feb 13, 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, 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 wanted 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 kind of predictions and rumours ... those we do not take into consideration," he said. "We have no plan (to go to Sarawak) by the year 2000 or 2020."

On the duplication of Federal and State laws regarding environment protection, Dr Mahathir said the Federal Government was empowered to check on State Governments which abused their power and went against the policies and laws of the Federal Government.

Dr Mahathir said he was not unduly worried about State Governments contravening Federal policies and laws as the parties had cordial working relationships.

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

Dr Mahathir also said as for natural resources in Sabah, particularly timber, there were Federal and State laws which were applicable in the State.

He said a third party was needed to study the matter before it could be known whether there was duplication of power in the implementation of Government policies.

On the smuggling of logs reported in Sabah recently, the Prime Minister said he was still awaiting the reports from the police and the Anti-Corruption Agency.

He said the reports would determine if the matter was serious.

Last month the State Forestry Department seized 3,049 logs worth about RM6 million in Tawau on suspicion that they were to be smuggled to Japan.

The Primary Industries Ministry and State Forestry Department had both claimed that they were the authority that issued licences to export logs.

On the Kelantan State Assembly which rejected six questions submitted by Barisan Nasional assemblymen concerning the Kota Baru Municipal Council, Dr Mahathir said, "If the questions were not relevant, we will not complain."

"But if the questions concerned the State's administration, it shows

that it (Kelantan Government) was afraid (to answer) and was hiding something," he added.

(END)