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Mahathir-Singapore

MALAYSIA CANNOT STOP FOREIGNERS FROM VISITING THE COUNTRY

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 7 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government cannot stop foreigners from visiting Malaysia if they have valid travel documents.

The prime minister said foreigners would only be deported upon the request of their respective governments if they were found to be involved in criminal activities.

"We have no extradition treaty to send back foreigners who commit non-criminal or political offences in their countries of origin," he said when commenting on a news report that an opposition candidate had sought refuge in Malaysia for fear of his safety after being labelled an anti-Christian Chinese chauvinist by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

According to the AFP report, lawyer Tang Liang Hong, 61, who lost in last week's general election as a Workers' Party candidate, left for Johor over the weekend.

Speaking to reporters after visitinng the RM2 billion Mines Resort City project in Sungai Besi, near here, Dr Mahathir said: "We cannot stop foreigners, especially from Singapore, from visiting our country if they want to. Maybe he (Tang) came on a visit pass."

"We are seldom involved with neighbouring countries...there are also people who run here, like the Achenese, but we cannot stop them," he added.

Asked whether Malaysia was providing Tang protection, he said there was no protection, adding: "There are Singaporeans who come and stay here and we allow (it)",

Asked whether Tang's presence could affect Malaysia-Singapore ties, he said: "We do not protect him and he has the right to come except if there is a request for his deportation because of a criminal offence."

On whether Malaysia would give political asylum to Tan if he sought it, Dr Mahathir said he did not know what was meant by "seeking political asylum". -- BERNAMA

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