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PM: Those with valid papers can come here

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Malaysia cannot stop foreigners with valid travel documents from entering the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister said those with valid travel documents were free to enter the country.

Asked to comment on an AFP report from Singapore which said that the republic's opposition candidate in the recent general election, Tang Liang Hong had sought refuge here, Dr Mahathir said foreigners would only be deported upon the request of their respective Governments or if they were found to be involved in criminal activities.

"We have no extradition treaty to repatriate foreigners who commit non-criminal or political offences in their countries," he said.

According to the AFP report, Tang, 61, who stood in last week's general election as a Workers' Party candidate, left for Johor over the weekend. The report said Tang had sought refuge here as he feared for his safety after being labelled an "anti-Christian Chinese chauvinist" by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

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

Dr Mahathir said there were other people who sought refuge in Malaysia such as the Achenese.

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

On whether Tang's presence could affect Malaysia-Singapore ties, he said: "We are not protecting him and he has the right to come here, unless of course, 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:

"I do not know what is meant by political asylum. He cannot be running away for political reasons.

"I have not heard anything on the matter. I have only read about it in the newspapers. All of us have to depend on the newspapers, otherwise we will end up uneducated.

"Now the newspapers know more about everything. We cannot point out (tegur) anything, if we point out, they get angry. There are those who even get angry, if we point out certain things indirectly. We cannot point out anything anymore. The newspapers are always right, especially your editors. They are always right, others are not."

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