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Mahathir-Leave

PRESS VERY FREE TO SPECULATE, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, May 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the press is free to speculate over his decision to take a two-month leave beginning May 19.

"I think the press is very free to speculate," he said in response to a question by a foreign journalist on his vacation during which his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, will be appointed the acting Prime Minister.

The journalist said there had been a lot of speculations about his long leave. She then listed out three of the so-called speculations.

One was that Dr Mahathir wanted to "test" the capability of Anwar, while the other was because the Prime Minister was apparently ill.

The third, according to the journalist, could be because Dr Mahathir wanted to promote the Multimedia Super Corridor during his vacation abroad.

When the journalist pointed out that the speculations were not from the media, Dr Mahathir said: "They will speculate through the press anyway."

"So, why don't you tell them to assume either one of the three (speculations)," the Prime Minister added.

Last Thursday, Dr Mahathir said that his two-month leave had nothing to do with his health. He said he is taking the leave to rest while doing some work and performing official visits to several countries. -- BERNAMA

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