

Malaysia is run very well, ⁸¹⁹⁻¹¹⁻⁹⁸ admits Chretien

CANADIAN Prime Minister Jean Chretien admitted yesterday that the political situation in Malaysia was not what he had expected.

"I told him (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad), the country has been run very, very well compared with situations in other countries.

"When we went to Northern Ireland there was nobody (on the streets), there was nobody in Lusaka (in Zambia) as well. (But here) things are run very well," he said.

Chretien told a news conference at the end of Apec leaders meeting that he also observed that there were few policemen and soldiers on the streets here.

The Canadian Prime Minister chatted with Dr Mahathir on the political situation in the country at the end of the leaders' summit. He did not hold a bilateral meeting with his Malaysian counterpart.

Dr Mahathir, at a separate press conference, had spoken of one leader who approached him to say that he (the leader) had been misled by media reports on the political situation here.

Chretien said he did tell Dr Mahathir that it would be better if Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was granted bail, to which Dr Mahathir replied: "It is for the judge to decide."

He said Dr Mahathir was not irritated when he "quite directly told him that Canada is not happy with the situation here" although "he did not have dinner with me. He moved me to a corner."

Chretien said he had to voice his concern over Anwar's treatment as he was a high-profile person and to ensure that due process of law was carried out.

He said this was why the Canadian Foreign and Trade Ministers had met Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.