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No election in next six months, says PM

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KUALA SELANGOR, Sat. - There will be no general election in the next six months as predicted by DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Therefore, Dr Mahathir said, there was no need for the DAP to make preparations for an early election.

Lim had said on Jan 18 that it was possible that the Barisan Nasional Government would call a snap general election in six months.

Lim had said elections might be held before the Commonwealth Games in September or the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation summit in November, and not later.

The current term of Parliament and State Assemblies in the peninsula expires in the year 2000.

The last general election was in 1995.

Lim had said he came to his conclusion because Dr Mahathir had expressed confidence that the economy would likely recover in six months to a year.

"So, because he (Lim) feels that the country's economic troubles may not be over by then, he says we are going to call a general election," Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said at the opening of the Kuala Selangor Umno divisional meeting.

"I'm not the type who will take a wager on this matter but if Kit Siang wants to bet 10 sen, I will put mine in.

"I guarantee that the DAP need not make any preparation. Just go home and sleep."

Dr Mahathir said there was no need for DAP members to go around making speeches in anticipation of a snap election.

Such actions, he said, would not help steer the country out of the current economic problems nor would it benefit DAP.

Later, when asked to comment on a proposal by a Singapore Opposition member that Malaysia and the island republic should study the possibility of forming an economic union, Dr Mahathir said:

"This is their (Singapore's) proposal and we are not rejecting it. But we need to know more details."

The suggestion was made by Opposition MP Chiam See Tong.

Foreign Minister Professor S. Jayakumar told the republic's Parliament yesterday that Singapore was prepared to consider an economic union with Malaysia.

Jayakumar said it would take two willing parties to make it work.

Dr Mahathir, however, said the proposal had never been discussed by leaders of both countries.

He added that Malaysia was always open to suggestions especially those which could help countries in the region.

Asked whether this also meant a possible monetary union, Dr Mahathir said: "It could, but all these should be studied."

Jayakumar, who had told the Singapore Parliament that he understood the basic thrust of Chiam's suggestion, said efforts to improve economic relations would be intensified to ensure that the republic and Malaysia could be stakeholders in each other's prosperity.

Chiam had said on Thursday that Singapore should seek economic union with Malaysia to reduce competition and tension between the two neighbours.

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