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Mahathir-East Timor

ACCEPT RESULT OF EAST TIMOR REFERENDUM

BANDAR JENGKA, Sept 7 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia wants the result of the East Timor referendum in which the people opted for independence to be accepted in good faith by the parties concerned.

"We want the result to be accepted because the Indonesian government decided to give the East Timor people a choice of remaining within Indonesia as an autonomous region or be independent.

"Now that they have chosen to be independent, the parties concerned have to accept the result," the Prime Minister told a press conference at the end of a two-day visit to Pahang today.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had a similar experience of holding a referendum under the Cobbold Commission sometime back to determine whether the people of Sabah and Sarawak wanted the two states to be part of Malaysia.

The result of the referendum showed that the people of Sabah and Sarawak wished to join Malaysia, and it was accepted.

Dr Mahathir said Singapore then became part of Malaysia but behaved as if it was another country, and Malaysia was willing to give Singapore freedom although it meant surrendering part of the country's territory to other people.

He said this when asked to comment on the latest developments in East Timor which had plunged into disorder following the United Nations-organised referendum held on Aug 30.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir had addressed a gathering of some 50,000 people of mostly Felda settlers in Jenka and its surrounding areas.

Last Saturday, the UN announced that 78.5 percent of East Timorese had opted for independence from Indonesia and rejected autonomy.

News reports from Jakarta today said Indonesia had declared martial law in East Timor by presidential decree following continued rioting and killings in the territory.

In his speech at the gathering, Dr Mahathir urged the people, especially settlers, to be grateful to the government and God for the good that the government's Felda land schemes have brought them.

He said they were fortunate to have been selected for the Felda land schemes which were implemented specially to help landless and poor Bumiputeras.

Dr Mahathir said now that the settlers were living in comfort it was only appropriate for them to thank the government by continuing to support the Barisan Nasional (BN) in the next general election.

"Prove it by giving your support to the Barisan Nasional at all times," he said.

He advised the settler community not to be influenced by the opposition which was merely instigating the people to fish for votes in the next general election, especially those using religion for political gains.

This group was trying to instil in the people hatred for the government in the hope of getting votes, he said.

Also present were his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Adnan Yaakob, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek.

-- BERNAMA

AFY ROS YBY

