

20 AUG 1999

Mahathir-Election

CHINA VISIT NOTHING TO DO WITH POLLS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

By: Ali Mamat

BEIJING, Aug 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said his visit to China has nothing to do with Malaysia's coming general election although the trip coincides with the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Sino-Malaysia diplomatic ties.

His visit here this time around, the fifth, had not inspired him to dissolve Parliament and determine the election date, said Dr Mahathir.

"This visit does not determine or serves as a yardstick to measure support for the Barisan Nasional from the Malaysian Chinese electorate in the coming polls," Dr Mahathir said at a Press conference at the end of his three-day working visit to China.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman, said support from Malaysian Chinese electorate for the governing coalition was not because of his visit to the republic.

"Chinese voters place greater importance on how far the national economy can grow further...on commerce, industries, political stability, peace and the people's well-being," he said.

"My China trip is not to fish for votes as it may not determine the outcome of the coming general election," he said.

Reflecting on history, Dr Mahathir said that second prime minister the late Tun Abdul Razak Hussein dissolved parliament and called for a general election upon returning from Beijing after signing the agreement for establishing diplomatic ties between Malaysia and China in 1974 "because it suited the need of that time."

"In the case of my visit this time around, I have not got the inspiration yet whether it is suitable or not for me to do like what Tun did," he said.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said PAS could promise the electorate a thousand and one things, even heaven, should the opposition party gain power in the coming general election as "it's easy for losers to make the promises they way they did".

PAS deputy president Abdul Hadi Awang reportedly said recently that PAS would grant women workers three months maternity leave and institutionalise a five-day working week, should the party form the next government.

"It's easy for PAS to make such promises as it is aware that it will not form the government. These promises are just to fish for extra votes or secure one or two more seats," he said.

Replying to a western journalist, Dr Mahathir said he had no regret over the action against his former deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim because "the law must be allowed to take its course, irrespective of the position or the status of anyone."

"We will not intervene with the process of the law, whether it involves the deputy prime minister or the prime minister himself.

"After all it is on record that some of our cabinet ministers had been taken to court and convicted for their wrong-doing. In fact currently two state executive councillors are being tried in court and we will not interfere, although they are from our own party," the prime minister said.

To another question from another western journalist, Dr Mahathir reminded the West to "look at themselves first before accusing others of human rights abuse".

According to the prime minister, when there was no news about the abuse of human rights in the West, it did not necessarily mean that there was no abuse on their part.

"It is just that the Asians are less likely to criticise others because we Asians do not lay the law for others to follow."

"However, it was known for a fact that the aborigines in many countries that were settled or occupied by the westerners were maltreated, imprisoned, neglected and even eliminated by the newcomers," Dr Mahathir said.

On the other hand, he said, it was on record that the aborigines in Malaysia were not only flourishing but also growing in numbers because they were not only protected but also treated and cared equally with the other races.

Dr Mahathir left Beijing later in the morning for Ulan Ude, the capital of Buryatia, for a three-day visit of the autonomous republic within the Russian Federation.

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