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Dr M's visit `connected to the election'

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KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad began today a three-day visit to Sabah which he said "is connected to the election" as speculation mounts that the State Assembly will be dissolved soon.

After launching the Libaran power station in Sandakan, the Prime Minister returned to Donggongon, the heart of the Moyog State seat where a major battle is shaping up involving incumbent Assemblyman Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, who is likely to be challenged by Parti Bersatu Sabah's Datuk Clarence Bongkos Malakun.

In Moyog, accompanied by Dompok, the Prime Minister launched the Sabah Native Affairs Council which, among others, administers the native court which deals with disputes over land inheritance and family issues.

The court will, in a case of illicit sex, for example, impose the "sogit" or penance, or ask the couple to leave the village.

Dr Mahathir, in his speech, said although native customary laws were not written, they were able to maintain order.

He added that on the contrary, western laws were being altered as values changed.

He said freedom, which was prized by the West, had reached an alarming stage as highlighted by the attitude towards marriage, an institution which was no longer respected.

The Prime Minister said Malaysians had to return to values dear to the people, while the West adapted its laws based on interests such as those of businesses.

He said the Malaysian system was fairer as justice was carried out regardless of who the individuals were.

Dr Mahathir added that if someone was guilty, punishment would be meted out although the person might be "known and loved for a long time".

He also alluded to situations when customary laws were in the way of progress, an area which the council would have to look into.

The Prime Minister later visited the residence of the Chief Minister at the Maksakazon Height in Penampang.

Later, at a Kongsu Raya gathering in Likas, Dr Mahathir said the people of Sabah shouldered the responsibility of thwarting politicians who stirred up parochial issues besides religious and cultural differences.

Dr Mahathir said he hoped that the BN would continue to rule Sabah, adding that the coalition represented all communities whose interests were factored in decision-making.

"That is why the country enjoys peace," he added.

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