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Mahathir-Election

DR MAHATHIR NOT INCLINED TO CALL FOR A SNAP GENERAL ELECTION

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the victory of the Barisan Nasional (BN) in Sabah will not induce him to call for a snap general election.

"I am not affected at all. I expected to win in Sabah...even with a one-seat majority," he said when asked whether he would call for the general election this year following the BN win.

The general election, last held in 1995, should be held by April next year.

"I don't take only that into account. We have done rather well despite all the prediction. Three months ago even Umno supporters said it would be difficult," he said.

"I need to take into consideration many other factors like expenses, favourable economic and political situation.... Many things which should be completed within 10 days would stretch on to 70 days...but I'm not saying about the courts," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after a delegation meeting between Malaysia and Poland at the Prime Minister's Department, here. Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski headed his delegation.

On the statements by several opposition party leaders that it would be difficult to topple the BN in the next general election, Dr Mahathir said that they had merely stated their opinions.

He said that Lim Kit Siang, the opposition leader, had stated that it would not be possible for them to form a government and at best, they could increase their representatives.

Dr Mahathir said that the victory of the BN in the last general election was extraordinary and it would be difficult to better or match the BN win in 1995.

"But I am confident that the BN would obtain a two-third majority," he said.

On the statement by Parti Rakyat Malaysia president Dr Syed Husin Ali that the BN could only be toppled if the opposition parties were united, Dr Mahathir said that the opposition parties could not possibly be united.

"It's not possible...If they stand united, it is easier for the BN to say they are hypocrites. If PAS cooperates with the DAP, the issue could be used to defend the BN," he said.

"PAS says that women cannot contest...haram (illegal). But they are supporting (Datin Seri Dr Wan) Azizah (Wan Ismail). This is hypocrisy," he said.

PAS has stated that they would support Dr Wan Azizah, the wife of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, if she wish to contest against the prime minister in Kubang Pasu.

Dr Mahathir said that he did not plan to retire now because he had responsibilities that needed to be discharged.

"Honestly, I wanted to retire last year but there were problems with my deputy who could not replace me. I have responsibilities...I am not talking about my popularity," he said.

He said that he would continue to be prime minister because he still has the support of Umno.

"I cannot step down just because Kit Siang is not supporting or Anwar is not supporting me. He (Anwar) is no longer an Umno member," he said.

Dr Mahathir also denied a Business Week report that the Multimedia

Super Corridor (MSC) project had received poor response from international companies.

The fact was that the MSC project had received encouraging response with 29 companies having so far registered with the MSC, he said.

"Our target is 50 world class technology companies by 2003. It is only just 1999 and we already have 29...we only need 21 more only and the possibility that the target would not be achieved is inaccurate," he said.

He said that many members of the MSC advisory panel had stated that they agree to attend the next meeting although not all would be able to attend due to their commitments.

"The physical development is also proceeding smoothly. They (the foreign media) always say that we are not capable... we are running a country of 22 million and we have done well in the last 40 years," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that it could be clearly seen that many reports by the foreign media were inaccurate and he had even been said to be "stupid" regarding the currency control measures.

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