

14/08/1999

Dr Mahathir: Unsuitable to limit term in office

SEREMBAN, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad described any move to limit the Prime Minister's term in office as "unsuitable".

What was important, he said, was for the Prime Minister to have the support of the people and his ability to perform, regardless of age.

"Nothing can be done in one (five-year) term. The first term is for planning, the second to implement and the third term is to see the results."

He was asked about the proposed manifesto of Parti Keadilan Nasional which said that the opposition coalition, if given the mandate to form the Government in the coming general election, would ensure a Prime Minister would not stay more than two terms (10 years).

According to the party, this was to ensure that no Prime Minister overstayed his welcome.

Dr Mahathir said the opposition could make its decision if any of its leaders became Prime Minister.

"Since they have not become one, they want to limit the term, but when it happens, it may be long."

He said limiting the term of office of leaders, including presidents, had been tried in some countries and even agreed upon by the candidates for the post.

"However when one of them became the president, that person asked for two terms and subsequently sought an extension for three terms."

On the possibility that a Prime Minister's long tenure in office would lead to impatience among hopefuls, Dr Mahathir said it was not right to be "too hasty".

"One or two terms ... it is not something suitable. It depends on the people. They are given the freedom and they can think. So there should not be any restriction on the people to choose candidates that they support," he said.

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