

14 MAY 1999

Mahathir-Election

GENERAL ELECTION BEFORE APRIL ?

KOTA KINABALU, May 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad indicated today that the general election may be held before April next year, without elaborating.

Yesterday, in Shah Alam, he dispelled speculation that the general election will be held next month.

"It will be held before April 2000, some time before that," he said responding to questions at a press conference here at the end of his two-day visit to Sabah.

Dr Mahathir said national economic recovery was one of the factors being considered in determining the general election date.

"It is a factor to be taken into consideration but other factors must also be taken into consideration. So, I cannot tell you yet but I will whisper to you next time," he said.

Malaysia's next general election is not due until June 2000.

Asked if he was prepared to hold the general election, the prime minister said: " I am always prepared to hold elections."

Asked about his nationwide tour fuelling speculation of an imminent general election, Dr Mahathir said: "The media are good at making predictions.

"The newspaper people are very clever...they eliminate the days which we cannot hold elections. They look into the weather and they come out with very accurate predictions."

Dr Mahathir also confirmed that he would be meeting Indonesian President B.J.Habibie on May 20 on Batam Island to discuss bilateral issues.

On World Bank President James Wolfensohn meeting Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport yesterday, Dr Mahathir said: "I hope she can resolve World Bank's problems and help Mr Wolfensohn. I'm quite sure she can give good advice."

Wan Azizah, wife of jailed former deputy prime minister and finance minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, reportedly met Wolfensohn in what was to have been a "hush-hush" meeting at the airport.

Wolfensohn arrived at the KLIA about 6pm yesterday enroute to Langkawi to attend the Apec financiers group meeting beginning today.

-- BERNAMA

HAK RYN