

20 MAY 1999

Mahathir-Habibie

MAHATHIR CONFIDENT INDONESIAIS WILL CHOOSE A GOOD GOVERNMENT

By: Tham Choy Lin

BATAM, May 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is confident that the Indonesians will elect a good government that will continue to bring good to Indonesia and its people in next month's general election.

Speaking to reporters after meeting President B.J. Habibie, here, Dr Mahathir said the Indonesian leader apprised him of the true situation in that country and he felt that the situation was not as bad as reported in the media.

"I am confident that the general election will proceed smoothly and in the end, the Indonesians who are known for their nationalistic spirit will surely choose a government that will do a lot of good for Indonesia," he said after the four-eye meeting which lasted 50 minutes.

The meeting was held as soon as Dr Mahathir arrived here for a short visit specially to hold bilateral talks with Habibie.

"I am confident that Indonesians who love Indonesia will not forget their responsibility and we in Malaysia feel easy because we know that Indonesia will continue to be progressive and peaceful," the prime minister said.

"And a developed and peaceful Indonesia is important to this region, especially for good relations between Malaysia and Indonesia".

Dr Mahathir described his visit to the island as very useful and very good for Malaysia and, he believed, also for Indonesia.

He said that at the meeting, he and President Habibie managed to resolve several small bilateral issues relating to trade and logging in their joint-border areas.

" This meeting really helps us to clear up bilateral problems, keeps us updated on each other's problems and to find ways and means of solving the problems in a way that is not to the detriment of each other," he added.

The meeting was followed by an hour-long meeting between the delegations from both countries.

He said there had been some problems in logging and trading at the border and border-crossing. These had been cleared.

"This meeting is really meant to keep us close together and up-to-date on each other's problems and how we remove these problems and also to encourage cooperation in the economic field, culture and politically," Dr Mahathir said.

Both leaders appeared relaxed at the news conference and President Habibie described Dr Mahathir as a senior and invited him to start the conference.

Habibie, who is the presidential candidate for Parti Golkar in the coming election, said he was thankful to see Dr Mahathir healthy and added "that is most important to me."

Habibie said Indonesia realised that the new millennium, which was only months away, would bring many changes, stiff international and industrial competition and would depend greatly on productivity.

"These are determined based on compatibility and harmony between culture and technological knowledge," he said.

He said that as Malaysia and Indonesia had similarities in various fields it was appropriate for the two countries to hold discussions at ministerial level and also between Dr Mahathir and himself to give priority to efforts to raise their productivity.

He was confident that Indonesia and Malaysia would be able to further step up cooperation in the fields of economy and culture to enhance their productivity and human resources.

-- BERNAMA

TCL JK