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Mahathir-election

MAHATHIR SHOULD WIN "EARLY" ELECTION, SAYS JOMO

By: Neville D'Cruz

MELBOURNE, Feb 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad should easily win Malaysia's next general election because of a "perception that he had contributed to an improvement of the country's economic situation", according to University of Malaya professor Jomo Kwame Sundaram.

Jomo, who is a professor in analytical economics and author, told "The Australian" newspaper in Sydney that Malaysia's middle class had credited Dr Mahathir for elevating them to that position.

He said among the older generation, especially older Chinese Malaysians, there was a strong perception that Dr Mahathir had shielded Malaysia from the chaos and instability experienced in Indonesia.

But the most potent reason why Dr Mahathir would win the next election was that as the incumbent he had more resources at his disposal, said Jomo.

Earlier Jomo told a briefing, organised by Sydney University's Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, that there was "a real possibility of an election, which could be in the first half of May".

Jomo said a key factor was the state election in Sabah, due by May 16 and that the federal election could well be held to coincide with the state poll.

The current term of the Sabah State Legislative Assembly expires on March 18 and the law requires an election be held within 60 days after that date.

Jomo said with economic recovery uncertain, Dr Mahathir could favour an early poll rather than wait until his term ends in mid-2000.

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