

03/10/1999

'Two-thirds majority needed to be strong country'

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has dismissed claims that the Government's principal objective of getting a two-thirds majority in the coming general election was to enable it to amend the Constitution.

He said it was to ensure a stable and strong Government which would enable the nation to face any challenge that came its way.

"We would never have been able to resist the International Monetary Fund during the financial crisis if our Government was not stable and strong.

"The world viewed us as being recalcitrant after we refused to emulate other affected countries, and (instead) went against 'conventional wisdom' in getting out of the crisis," he said at a 2 1/2 hour dialogue with Malaysian students at Malaysia Hall on Friday.

Dr Mahathir was asked whether he expected the Barisan Nasional to retain its two-thirds mandate in the election.

Dr Mahathir said the country would be "bullied by other people and would not be as free as it was" if the Government was weak.

He said he was confident that the BN would retain its two-thirds majority in the election.

Asked why the Government stopped students from participating in politics, the Prime Minister said learning should be their priority.

He said Malaysia, as a developing country, could not afford to allow students to be distracted from their studies as their contribution was greatly needed to help the country achieve developed status.

Saying that students should not compare their situation (as far as freedom was concerned) to that of students in the United States, Dr Mahathir said the US could afford to do so as it was a developed country.

Also present at the dialogue were Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed and Malaysian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Datuk Amir Jaafar.

(END)