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Mahathir-Election

PM HAS NOT MADE UP HIS MIND TO HOLD THE GENERAL ELECTION

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the political climate is favourable for the Barisan Nasional (BN) but he has not made up his mind whether to hold the general election now.

"I don't know whether I will hold an election or not...I have not made up (my mind)," he told a news conference at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport on his return from his visit to the United States, Britain and Zimbabwe.

He was asked to comment of speculations that the general election is imminent that even the Malaysian stock market has reacted to the rumours.

Yesterday, the stock market went up by about 4 per cent and some people believe that it was largely due to speculations that Dr Mahathir would call for the general election.

"I don't know, stock market goes up and down on all kinds of rumours. Maybe election is good for them so they have...the stock market index goes up," he said.

The prime minister said the support for the BN was very strong now because the people want to see the BN returned with a strong majority to ensure stability in the country.

He said stability in the country was important to ensure that economic growth would take place.

"Barisan has proven that we can manage the economy of this country even during an unusual crisis, a crisis that most countries find difficult to handle and have to rely on outside help," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the BN government had managed its own recovery in Malaysia and it was a very strong recovery.

"The climate is always right for election. Immediately after the last election also we could hold another election because the climate was right but it is not climate alone," he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir said during his visit to the United States recently, he found that Americans were so obsessed with the jailing of a Canadian journalist to the extent of threatening that there would be no investment in Malaysia.

"The threats were given by a few of them and some journalists there obviously hope that the jailing of this journalist would stop all investments by Americans in Malaysia," he said.

The journalist, Murray Hiebert, of the Far Eastern Economic Review, was sent to jail for contempt of court for a story he wrote in the magazine.

The prime minister believed that investors and businessmen in America were very keen to be involved in Malaysia's economy as evident from his visit to Lucent Technologies where they were very positive about the Multimedia Super Corridor.

"The attitude of the business people is completely different from the attitude of the journalists. Somehow or rather, the journalists do not like us and want to give a bad report about us so that our economy will be affected, so that there will be no tourists coming here or no investors coming here," he said

Dr Mahathir said one of the American journalists even asked him whether he felt ashamed that he has jailed a Western journalist.

"I had to reply that I made no distinction between Western or Eastern journalists," he said.

The prime minister had asked them to have their priorities right like giving attention to the killing and slaughtering of many people around the world.

"Their fate deserve greater attention of the people who can help like the powerful countries and all that, then the fate of a single journalist who has gone to jail only for six weeks," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Americans make such a big do about the jailing of the journalist as if Western journalists should never be jailed and obviously implying that Eastern or Asian journalists could be jailed.

"They keep on repeating this question over and over again. Wherever I go, this was the question, but when I went to Europe and elsewhere, nobody ask this question," he said.

Malaysia does not practise discrimination and everybody is equal before the law and even the king is subject to the law, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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