

Mahathir warns absentee MPs

Barisan Nasional may not pick them for next general election

SUN 17. 10. 2000 KUALA LUMPUR, Mon: Barisan Nasional (BN) Members of Parliament frequently absent from Dewan Rakyat sittings may not be considered for renomination for the next general election.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reiterated this point during a meeting with the MPs this morning ahead of today's Dewan Rakyat sitting, reports Bernama.

Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said he again told them that their attendance will be noted and taken into account.

"I reminded them ... we'll take down their attendance (during the entire meeting) and this will be taken into account when we prepare the candidates list for the general election," he said after the pre-council meeting at Parliament House.

To a question, he said it does not mean blacklisting habitual absentees for causing the lack of quorum during sittings. However, those concerned may not be among the election candidates later.

The current meeting, during which Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin will table the 2001 Budget on Oct 27, ends on Dec 20.

Past Dewan Rakyat sittings were often disrupted by a lack of quorum as MPs stayed out of the chamber and the warning bell had to be sounded to summon them in.

The House, comprising 193 MPs, including 45 from the opposition, needs 26 members for a quorum.

At today's sitting, Barisan MPs accounted for more than two-thirds of the 148 members present. The number, however, dwindled to about 20 from the BN side by the end of the day.

Backbenchers Club president Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis said Mahathir's reminder is timely and appropriate.

He said that all Barisan MPs were initially selected by the Prime Minister to contest as candidates in the general election.

"He has the right to put a benchmark for the MPs to meet, as he is the one who gave them the opportunity to be where they are today," he said, urging MPs to heed Mahathir's subtle warning.