

05 MAY 2001

Mahathir-Human Rights

US MAY HAVE LOST SEAT BECAUSE OF INTERFERENCE IN OTHER COUNTRIES

MELAKA, May 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the United States may have lost its seat on the United Nations Human Rights Commission because of its interference in human rights in other countries.

"It's possible. We don't know the reason, we're only guessing.

"Maybe there are other countries more qualified to sit on the panel," he told reporters after attending a special gathering of commandos at the Sungai Udang Camp, here.

He was asked whether the US' interference in the human rights of other countries was a factor for it being voted off the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Commission whose main function is to investigate human rights violations worldwide.

The three council seats allocated for western nations went to France, which received 52 votes, Austria (41) and Sweden (32). The US received 29 votes.

Dr Mahathir said that this time the countries casting the votes felt that they should elect other countries.

"This is a democratic process. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. The loser must accept it," he said.

Asked about the significance of the US' loss, he said it was difficult to read the stand of the countries that voted.

On the abolition of the 10 per cent levy on profits repatriated within one year, which was announced on Wednesday, Dr Mahathir said it was a pragmatic move.

"We found that we could not collect much and the process for collecting the levy was complicated," he said.

Asked to comment on the Malaysian Trades Union Congress' (MTUC) decision to proceed with its picket on May 12, he said the government preferred negotiation to resolve any problem.

"What can we do. I don't know what can be achieved by picketing except to cause a strain in relations," he said, adding that picketing would not get the government to bow to the MTUC.

-- BERNAMA

NO SBS JK