

30 SEP 2002

Musa-Observer

MUSA HITAM LEADS PAKISTAN POLL OBSERVER GROUP

By: Shakir Husain

DUBAI, Sept 30 (Bernama) -- Former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Musa Hitam is leading a group of 22 Commonwealth election observers in Pakistan to observe the country's general elections scheduled for Oct 10.

Musa, who held meetings in Dubai on Saturday with the election observers drawn from 18 countries, said that the group was constituted by the London-based Commonwealth Secretariat in response to requests made by the government and the Election Commission of Pakistan.

The group is charged with "determining in its own judgment whether the conditions exist for a free expression of will by the electors and if the results of the elections reflect the wishes of the people" of Pakistan, he told Bernama before leaving for Pakistan.

"We will observe the conduct of both the election campaign and the polling," he said.

Mohamed Mokhtar Ahmad, head of the Election Commission (SPR) office in Penang, is also part of the group.

"The observer group is to act impartially and independently as we have been selected (for the task) as individuals and not as representatives of our governments," Musa said.

He said that the group's brief is to "observe and not supervise" the elections.

"We are going to Pakistan with an open mind and will try to meet as many people and groups as possible" to do the job, he said.

The former Malaysian deputy prime minister said that it was an honour for him to be the head of the group because "Pakistan is an important member of the international community and has close relations with Malaysia."

This is the second time that Musa is leading a Commonwealth election observer group.

Musa has been acting for six years as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's personal envoy to the eight-member Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group.

-- BERNAMA

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