

Dr M: No risk of extremists ruling country

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PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia is not in any danger of extremist Islamists taking over the Government as most Muslim Malays are rational and knowledgeable about religious matters, said Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"I think there is concern by a lot of people outside the country, especially Europeans, that Malaysia is on the verge of becoming an extremist nation.

"There are some Muslim Malays who are not knowledgeable about Islam and may be misled by those pretending to know Islam," the former prime minister told reporters after receiving Singapore's Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew at the Perdana Leadership Foundation here.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked what he and Lee, who is also a former prime minister, had discussed.

Lee, who arrived on Monday for a four-day visit, will be giving a talk at the World Ethics and Integrity Forum 2005 in Kuala Lumpur.

Asked if they had discussed the state of bilateral affairs between the two countries, Dr Mahathir said they did not, but added that "bilateral relations look very good."

Dr Mahathir said Lee had also sought his assessment of the country's progress over the last 18 months since the change in leadership.

"I told him I was sorry I could not answer and explained to him that when I stepped down, I promised myself I would not interfere or pass any comment as I didn't want to be seen as hampering the Government."

Dr Mahathir said they also talked about old times.

"I explained to him how I was going about writing my memoirs, and that I was doing this very slowly in long hand, and collecting pictures."

He also said he was glad to see that Lee "was quite well and still being his old self".

Dr Mahathir added that Lee also brought up the subject of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.