

12/02/2003

Electronic voting system will facilitate election process, says Dr M

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The country will in time adopt an electronic voting system, as it will facilitate the election process, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today. Electronic voting would enable results to be obtained more speedily.

"The Election Commission demonstrated the system to me yesterday ...its mechanism and how voting is carried out under the system. The Government, however, has yet to decide whether it will be used," he said after launching the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre at the Mandarin Oriental.

The Prime Minister was asked about his working visit to the Commission headquarters in Putrajaya yesterday. Dr Mahathir was briefed on preparations for the general election, and electronic voting.

Election Commission chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman had said the entire nation must be linked up before the system could be implemented.

On an EC proposal that all election candidates be required to sign a pledge or Akujanji from the next general election, Dr Mahathir said he had not been informed of the matter but it could be one of the Commission's proposals. "The Commission can forward this if it wants to."

Asked if it would curb aggressive campaigning, the Prime Minister said: "We (the BN) have no problems. It is those people resorting to violence after seeing that they cannot win."

Abdul Rashid was today quoted as saying that candidates who breached the pledge by resorting to unhealthy practices, including aggressive campaigning, might stand to lose their eligibility to contest, beginning with the next general election.

On whether measures were being formulated to rescue State Amanah Saham funds, Dr Mahathir said no decision had been taken.

He reminded investors that there were times when investments did not result in profit.

"What I do not understand is those who invest and believe that they should only profit all the time. There are times when our investments are not profitable ...we have to accept this fact.

"But we have here those who, after reaping profits for several years, moan when they suffer losses. In investments, sometimes you gain and sometimes you lose ...there is no guarantee. If you want a guarantee, keep money in the bank and collect interest ...that is guaranteed."

There has been much recent speculation regarding the State Amanah Saham funds, including Amanah Saham Selangor, Amanah Saham Johor, Dana Johor and others. Some of these funds are among the worst-performing unit trusts in the country, and many have gone years without paying dividends.

The Selangor State Government recently announced plans to close down the Amanah Saham Selangor scheme as it was not profiting investors.

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on France, Germany and Belgium vetoing Nato's plans to defend Turkey in the event of war against Iraq.

He said: "It is obviously their stand not to wage war and to find some other solution to settle this problem with Iraq, and I think we are fully supportive of this."

France, Germany and Belgium had argued that preparations to defend Turkey could be seen as sanctioning military action against Iraq before diplomatic initiatives had been exhausted.

Turkey invoked Nato's Article 4 after the three countries blocked proposals to deploy AWACS surveillance planes, Patriot missiles and anti-chemical and anti-biological warfare teams.