

'Don't forget that Chin Peng opposed democracy'

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By Lawrence Yong

Let's not forget that Chin Peng had ambitions to turn Malaysia into a communist state rather than a democracy, former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

This was his response when asked what for the correct thing to do in the debate on the return of Chin Peng's ashes to Malaysia, to which the Najib government is vehemently opposed.

NONE"Let's not have this controversy. Most people feel very hurt and some thought he was not Malaysian ... he did something for his own ambition to set up a communist state in this country, not a democracy," Mahathir told reporters at the International Youth Centre in Cheras.

"Why should you stir up people's feelings?"

Although Mahathir was a signatory to the 1989 Hatyai peace agreement that allowed the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) members to resettle in Malaysia, he declined to comment when asked whether Chin Peng had applied for citizenship.

"I work according to the advice I am given," he said cryptically.

Chin Peng, the former CPM secretary-general, died of cancer in Bangkok on Sept 16. Among his last wishes was a desire to be buried in his hometown of Sitiawan, Perak.

The government opposed this on the basis that Chin Peng had not received citizenship within the stipulated period under the Hatyai agreement, unlike other CPM members.

Even after his remains were cremated on Monday, the spectre of his 'return' lives on.

NONETwo men - a Malaysian and a Hong Kong national - were briefly detained upon arrival at the Bayan Lepas International Airport in Penang yesterday, reportedly for bringing in mementoes from Chin Peng's funeral.

Commenting on the incident, Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said they were only investigated and not arrested.

Zahid has expressed the worry that Malaysians would build a monument to Chin Peng if his ashes are brought into Malaysia.

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