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Non-Malay can be PM, says Dr M

'Move not against Federal Constitution'

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BANGI: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said non-Malay leaders can be elected as prime minister as it is not against the Federal Constitution.

Speaking at an event to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Malaysia-Cuba bilateral relations, Mahathir said even leaders like DAP's Lim Kit Siang can assume the post.

"This is a democratic country ... if people want Lim to be the prime minister, the constitution does not prevent (that), even though he is Chinese," he said.

However, the veteran statesman said DAP's way of managing Malaysia would not be good for the country.

"If the people want him, they will get him, but then they will have to pay the price later," he said during the event held at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) yesterday.

Also present was his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, Cuban Ambassador to Malaysia Ruben Perez Valdez, UKM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Noor Azlan Ghazali and several foreign ambassadors.

Earlier in his speech, Mahathir commended Malaysia's second prime minister Tun Abdul Razak for establishing ties with communist-led Cuba in 1975 despite the Cold War tension between capitalism and communism at the time.

"He overcame a lot of resistance in establishing relations with communist countries," Mahathir said, adding that both parties had agreed not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

He said through the years, bilateral

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ties between both countries were more of a formality until he himself decided to visit Cuba during his premiership.

"Of course, Cuba's 'northern neighbour' thinks that nobody should establish relations with Cuba.

"We felt that we were quite independent and we cannot be influenced by other countries," he said.

Commenting on Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's sodomy verdict today, Mahathir said it is up to the country's legal system to determine.

"I have no say in this. Whatever they decide is, whatever they decide and we have to accept it," he said.

Mahathir added that anyone who committed a crime, regardless of position and status, should be punished if found guilty.

"We are all equal before the law," he said.



Mahathir at the event with Valdez.