

## **Mahathir defends ministers' visits to Semenyih**

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PUTRAJAYA, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today spoke in defence of the ministers who had gone down to the ground in Semenyih where a by-election is to be held on March 2, saying that the election campaign had yet to begin.

"We do not have an election yet (in Semenyih); they can go (there) if they want to," the Prime Minister said when asked to comment on criticism by Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih 2.0) chairman Thomas Fann.

"The ministers are also going to other places, sometimes they go abroad because we have elections overseas," Dr Mahathir said in jest at a press conference here.

Fann had made the criticism citing the visits of Home Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Youth and Sports Minister Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman, Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik and Rural Development Minister Datuk Seri Rina Mohd Harun to the Semenyih state constituency since last Saturday.

Nomination for the Semenyih by-election is on Saturday, Feb 16. Polling is on March 2.

Asked about his meeting with Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal on the issue of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) spreading its wings to Sabah, Dr Mahathir, who is Bersatu chairman, said the decision on the matter would only be made after discussions within the party.

"He gave his opinion. We are not subject to anybody else's opinion except our assessment as to whether we have to go or not (to Sabah)," he said.

Independent Sulaman assemblyman and former Sabah UMNO chairman Datuk Hajiji Noor had reportedly said that Bersatu would spread its wings to Sabah soon.

Subsequently, Mohd Shafie, who is president of the ruling Parti Warisan Sabah, reportedly said that he hoped that Bersatu would not spread its wings to Sabah as Warisan and Bersatu had reached a “sibling agreement” on the matter.

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