

MAHATHIR-ASEAN

79 P
KUALA LUMPUR, MARCH 3 (BERNAMA) — DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY ASEAN HAD NO INTENTION OF ACTING AS A MILITARY BLOC EVEN IN THE EVENT OF THE SINO-VIETNAMESE WAS SPREADING TO ASEAN COUNTRIES.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER STRESSED THAT ASEAN WAS AN ECONOMIC GROUPING AND IT WOULD REMAIN SO.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS HERE, HE REITERATED THAT ASEAN HOPED THE WAR WOULD BE A LIMITED CONFLICT BETWEEN CHINA AND VIETNAM AND THAT IT WOULD NOT ESCALATE INTO A CONFLICT BETWEEN BIG POWERS.

+BUT IF THE CONFLICT ESCALATES, NOT ONLY ASEAN BUT EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD WOULD BE AFFECTED,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID MALAYSIA LIKE ANY OTHER ASEAN NATIONS HAD SIGNED BILATERAL AGREEMENTS WITH EACH OTHER WHICH PROVIDED FOR LIMITED COOPERATION IN CERTAIN AREAS.

+WE CAN ACT BILATERALLY IF WE FEEL THAT WE ARE BEING THREATENED,+ HE POINTED OUT. — BERNAMA MORE 1420/SZ

MAHATHIR-ASEAN 2 KUALA LUMPUR

ON THE QUESTION OF ASEAN MEDIATING IN THE CONFLICT, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID: +WE ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLEBUT WHETHER WE ARE ACCEPTED IS ANOTHER QUESTION.+

+THERE HAS BEEN TALKS ABOUT THIS BUT WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER BOTH SIDES AGREE TO THIS.

+BUT EVEN IF THEY ACCEPT US, THEY MIGHT LAY CERTAIN PRECONDITIONS WHICH MIGHT MAKE OUR TASK IMPOSSIBLE,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR STRESSED THAT ASEAN HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT WAS ALWAYS CONSCIOUS OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY IN THE REGION +BUT WE CAN'T FORCE OUR OPINION ON OTHERS.+

— BERNAMA 1420/SZ