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Mahathir-Clinton

MAHATHIR TO WAIT BEFORE MAKING COMMENT ON CLINTON'S VICTORY

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 4 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today congratulated Bill Clinton on his election victory but said he would wait to know more about the U.S. president-elect before making any comment.

While congratulating Clinton on the near landslide victory over incumbent George Bush, the Prime Minister said Malaysia was interested to know more about Clinton's foreign policy because very little of it was known.

Speaking to reporters after launching a book, +Memoir Seorang Pejuang+ (Memoirs of a Fighter), an autobiography by Tan Sri Aishah Ghani, at the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka here, he said he hoped that the new American administration would not be so frightened of the proposed East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC), a consultative forum of East Asian countries initiated by Malaysia.

+We hope that they are not so frightened with a simple forum of the East Asians... we are **not** a trade bloc, + he said, expressing the hope that Washington would look at the EAEC proposal with less emotion. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said Clinton's victory was clear and that the pre-election debate which concentrated more on domestic matters had a hand in determining the outcome of the election.

Bush's defeat in the presidential election was due to the prominent role played by his former Secretary of State James Baker. Baker was appointed Chief of Staff of the White House prior to the election, he added.

Dr Mahathir said Bush also did not give sufficient attention to **domestic** matters, including the economy.

+I would say that among the major reasons (for Bush's defeat) was that he had Baker with him and it is a good thing now that Baker is put out of the picture, + he added.

Although Clinton had stated human rights and environment as his election platform, Dr Mahathir said the Americans had better attend to their human rights problem first before exporting it to the other countries.

+You cannot preach something you don't practise. We also hope that there is no attempt made to export their ideas and standards to other people, + he added. -- more

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Commenting on the detention of 24 Malaysian tourists on their arrival in Boston on Oct 21, Dr Mahathir said he thought the matter had affected the good image of the US abroad.

Although the people might have done something wrong, the manner in which they were treated by the US authorities was something that would not be tolerated in Malaysia, he added.

+We don't treat foreigners that way, especially tourists to our country, even if they are wrong. We have some one million foreigners coming here illegally but we have not treated them that way,+ he said.

+Memoir Seorang Pejuang+ is a memoir compiled by Aishah, the former Welfare Minister and second woman appointed to the Cabinet after Merdeka. The book is published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Mohamad Zahir Ismail were among those who attended the launching. -- more

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Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba said Malaysia would accept whoever became US President so long as the policies of his administration benefited the world.

+Malaysia does not meddle in the politics of others.. . who wins or loses., its their business ,+he added when commenting on Clinton's victory.

Ghafar., however, expressed the hope that a statement that Clinton was not pro-Arab was untrue.

+The people of Palestine have long suffered. . . they hope big countries like America can help resolve their problem,+ he told reporters after opening the +AgriTech 92+ exhibition at the Putra World Trade Centre.

He hoped the president-elect would be able to bring about a settlement of the Palestinian issue. -- Bernama

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