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Mahathir-Australia
MAHATHIR REGRETS AUSTRALIA'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS MALAYSIA

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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov. 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed regret over Australia blowing up the issue of his non-attendance at the informal meeting of APEC leaders in Seattle.

"I fail to understand the attitude of Australia which was more angry than the United States because I did not go to Seattle," he told reporters at Parliament House here.

He said his non-attendance was the United States' problem because it invited him to attend, and not that of Australia's.

He added: "But, it seems, Australia is more angry than the United States because I did not go and (it) scolded me, and called me "mamak" and all kinds of things.

"What kind of journalists, who can use ill words against me simply because I did not go to America."

He was commenting on Australian newspaper reports and statements by Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating criticising him for not attending the meeting in Seattle. -- more

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Keating, responding to questions from journalists before leaving Seattle on Sunday whether Dr Mahathir "was a lost cause for APEC", replied that he did not want to answer any questions about him.

"I don't know and I don't care... I'm sick of answering questions about Dr Mahathir," he was quoted by the Australian newspapers as saying.

Dr Mahathir said: "Does it mean that, everytime I am invited I must rush there.

"Very difficult to love them... anything we try to do seems difficult.

"They (Australian journalists) lack manners... that's why I say they do not have Asian character and as such their statement that they are an Asian nation has no meaning whatsoever." His last comment was made in a serious tone.

Dr Mahathir said Australia would immediately counter if Malaysia criticised it.

"When they criticise us, we reply (and) they say we should not say such things but they were the ones who criticised us first," he added. -- more

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Asked if any action was contemplated against anyone, Dr Mahathir said: "We can't do anything if people have no manners... if children, we can smack them but a whole nation or the journalists of one nation who have no manners, it's very difficult." -- Bernama

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