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Mahathir-Hostage

MAHATHIR EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER HOSTAGE INCIDENT

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has expressed concern over the seizure of hostages, including the Malaysian ambassador, by guerrillas in Peru today.

However, the Prime Minister said, he is sure the Peruvian government will do their best to ensure the release of the hostages.

"We are very concerned...they (the Peruvian government) are very close and sincere to us. So I am quite sure they will do their best.

"They will do what they think is best," he told reporters here.

Dr Mahathir said he was briefed by Wisma Putra on the incident as soon as it happened.

He said the government would do whatever it could when the need arises.

Malaysia's ambassador, Datuk Ahmad Mokhtar Selat, is among at least 200 hostages held by heavily armed guerrillas at the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima.

"At the moment, we will just have to watch what is happening," he said.

Dr Mahathir said as far as he knew the ambassador was the only Malaysian involved in the hostage drama.

The Prime Minister said he is waiting for Wisma Putra to assess the situation.

He said the government has no plan yet to send Wisma Putra officials to Peru.

Dr Mahathir said such incidents sometimes happen.

Citing an example, he said there was a similar incident in Algeria but "our diplomats escaped". -- BERNAMA

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