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Mahathir-dadah

MALAYSIA CAN HELP TO CHECK MONEY LAUNDERING, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 3 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will cooperate with the United States to check the laundering of dadah money but is against any move to extend enforcement of US laws to the country, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the existence of offshore banking centres, like in Labuan, did not mean that money laundering would be a problem in the country.

"We ourselves do not like this activity (money laundering) but where is the proof that we are involved?" he told reporters on his return here from Bangkok where he attended the Asia-Europe summit.

He was commenting on the 1996 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, which was released in Washington yesterday, that Malaysia has taken some very strong measures in the counter-narcotics area, but gave "medium" priority to money laundering.

Dr Mahathir said money laundering occurred in certain places, including in the US, and that country should concentrate on matters within its jurisdiction and not try to exercise "extra territorial rights".

"We can cooperate with them but it is not their right to come here to arrest people and bring them back for trial according to their laws. We consider this a violation of our independence," he said.

Dr Mahathir said if the West could accuse Malaysia of lacking laws against money laundering, Malaysia could blame them for not doing enough to fight the dadah menace.

The rampant dadah trafficking in various parts of the world was due to the big market for illicit drugs in developed countries, including the US and in Europe, he said.

Dadah consuming countries were as responsible for the problem as the producing countries, he said.

"Some people in the West feel that tobacco and marijuana are more or less the same, so what is wrong with smoking it?" he said.

The report also said Malaysia's "asset seizure law is narrow in scope and has had only limited success in confiscating drug money". -- Bernama

MGM YBY