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Mahathir-security

SOLVE PROBLEMS THROUGH DIRECT CONTACT, SAYS MAHATHIR

By: Muin Abdul Majid

SUBIC BAY, Nov 25 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today any problematic situation in the South China Sea will only be stabilised through the affected countries having direct contacts with each other.

The prime minister said Malaysia was not worried about these matters which could be resolved.

"We do not think that the presence of warships belonging to any country in the region is going to help stabilise the situation," he said when asked about the security situation in the region at a news conference at the end of the Apec summit here.

He also said that China had agreed to discuss the issue on a multilateral basis.

"We have been in contact with China and we do not feel threatened by it," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said that Malaysia did not think that a security treaty between the United States and Japan would contribute much towards stabilising the situation in the South China Sea.

Asked about the Asean Regional Forum (ARF), he said Malaysian was quite satisfied with it and believed that it could hold its own during the forum's discussions.

Dr Mahathir said: "We are not making any complaint and there should be no domination by anyone over the ARF."

Touching on the racial debate which is going on in Australia, he said he did not raise the issue with his Australian counterpart John Howard.

"It's not an official Australian policy. It's just an aberration voiced by some people of no consequence and we are not taking any notice of it," he said.

The racial debate was sparked by a speech by an independent Member of Parliament, Pauline Hanson, who said that Australia should stop accepting any more immigrants for fear of an "Asian invasion".

Asked about the American extra-territorial action to penalise non-American firms which are involved in business dealings with Libya and Iran, Dr Mahathir said he had been assured even before he came to Subic that Malaysian firms would not be affected as the provisions did not apply to Malaysia.

Hence, he said, there would be no restriction on Malaysian participation in these two countries.

As such, there was no necessity to raise the matter with American President Bill Clinton during their meeting here, Dr Mahathir said. --

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