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ASEAN TO FIGHT INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY AGAINST REGION'S CURRENCIES

By: Tham Choy Lin

PETALING JAYA, July 25 (Bernama) -- Asean foreign ministers have expressed serious concern over international currency manipulation which they say destabilises their currencies.

"Well-planned efforts to destabilise Asean currencies for self-serving purposes" threatens the stability of all its economies, they said in a joint communique to be released later today at the close of the 30th Asean Ministerial Meeting (AMM) here today.

The rallying call, unprecedented in the grouping's 30-year history, came as the currencies of Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia continued to come under selling pressure as speculators cashed these currencies for the US dollar.

Speculators claimed that concerns over excessive loans to the property sector, current account deficits, banking problems, steep interest rates hike and slow export growth in the region, led to the onslaught.

However, many others in Asean felt otherwise, saying that speculators were undermining Asean economies.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad hit the nail on the head when he accused "rogue speculators" wanting to "destroy" weak countries in their crusade for open societies.

He said the present arrangement among Asean states was ineffective in dealing with speculative attacks.

As such, the foreign ministers have called for further intensification of Asean cooperation to safeguard and promote Asean's interests in this regard.

East Asian and Pacific central bankers, currently meeting in Shanghai, are expected among others to deal with the currency crisis set off by the July 2 float of the Thai Baht following attacks by speculators which has yet to abate.-- BERNAMA

TCL MR SHY