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Mahathir-Soros

MAHATHIR SAYS HE HAS NO WISH TO MEET SOROS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he has no wish to meet U.S. financier George Soros, who has been blamed for the fall of the ringgit and other Southeast Asian currencies.

"I will go to Hong Kong but I don't have any wish to meet him (Soros)," he told reporters after visiting the National Sports Complex and Games Village in Bukit Jalil, near here.

On the report that the World Bank was arranging the said meeting, he said: "I have never given the World Bank any mandate to arrange anything."

Yesterday, World Bank spokesman Tim Cullen was reported as saying in Hong Kong that the bank would arrange for a meeting between Dr Mahathir and Soros.

Cullen had said that the meeting would take place during a three-day World Bank-International Monetary Fund meeting scheduled to start in Hong Kong on Sept 20.

Dr Mahathir said Soros could make his statement through the press as he (Soros) had only listened to him through the press.

"He has only listened to me through the press, he can make the statement through the press... I will listen," he said.

Asked whether it was right for the World Bank to arrange for the meeting, the prime minister said: "I don't know what business it is of theirs, trying to make this kind of manipulative speculation legal, is it?"

"We are not against speculation, but we are against manipulation by people who have the money... you can push things up and down and make money out of countries which are just emerging and in the process, impoverishing the poor of these countries," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was not only talking about Malaysia because other countries were also affected by this kind of manipulation and the poor people of these countries were suffering even more.

"All these countries have spent 40 years trying to build up their economy, and a moron like Soros comes along with a lot of money... Moron is a person from Moron, he is called a moron, it's a place called Moronia," he said.

Dr Mahathir said no one could ever say that undermining the economy of a country was a fair thing to do.

"How can anybody ever say it is fair to undermine the economy of a country. If that is fair, then it is better that we don't develop at all, why should we allow them to undermine, we undermine it ourselves, we can become as corrupt as possible, take our money out of our own country, impoverish our people.

"I would rather Malaysians impoverish Malaysians than have these people who have so much money trying to make money out of poor people, the principle is all wrong.

"When you are rich you help the poor... this, when you are rich you steal from the poor, and that's exactly what Soros has done, stealing from the poor... nothing can justify that, it's a crime," he said.

Asked to elaborate on the agreement between Malaysia and China to promote power centres in Asia and Europe, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia did not want the world to be dominated by only one super power.

"We do not want a single super power which will oppress the world. We want competition among the powerful nations, so China agreed with us.

"We hope to be given the freedom to speak with whomever we like, now when we want to speak with Japan, with South Korea, we are not allowed. It can do what it likes but we can't. It even complains tht I wear the baju Melayu," he said.

Yesterday, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was reported as saying that Malaysia and China had agreed in principle to promote power centres in Asia and Europe for the development of a healthy international community as at the moment so much attention had been given to the United States.

This was reached during a private meeting between Dr Mahathir and his Chinese counterpart, Li Peng, yesterday. -- BERNAMA

AFY JK