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Mahathir-Everest

MAHATHIR:NO PRESSURE ON EVEREST CLIMBERS

KUALA LUMPUR, May 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today dismissed notions that the government pressured the Malaysian Everest climbers in their quest to conquer the world's highest peak.

He said the government had always wanted the team to put safety of the members first.

"We do not put any pressure, we told them to put safety first," he told reporters at Parliament House lobby here.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on a news report quoting a New Zealand Everest team leader Guy Cotter as saying that the Malaysian climbers were under a lot of pressure from the government in what Cotter described as a "flag-waving exercise" to the summit.

Cotter was also quoted as saying that "people back in Kuala Lumpur don't understand anything about mountaineering. Their government has told them they are expected to summit Everest by May 20."

"I'm perplexed why other people should care about how we do things," said Dr Mahathir.

The prime minister, who mooted the Malaysia-Everest '97 project, launched it in June last year. It involved 20 climbers.

"How could we pressure them. They volunteered to do it and do it their way. We know they are highly spirited. No pressure what-so-ever," Dr Mahathir said.

The Malaysian climbers had reportedly postponed their assault of the summit because of bad weather conditions and were resting at the Everest Base Camp for safety.-- BERNAMA

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