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Mahathir-Myanmar

US SANCTION WILL NOT AFFECT MYANMAR JOINING ASEAN

KUALA LUMPUR, April 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the United States' decision to impose economic sanctions against Myanmar will not affect Yangon's entry into Asean.

"We are going to work very hard to get Myanmar into Asean," he told reporters when asked to comment on the decision by the Clinton Administration to bar new US investments in Myanmar.

Asked if Malaysia, as current chairman of Asean, will protest against the US decision, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would discuss the matter with other Asean countries.

On whether the move would affect Asean-US relations, he said: "No, I don't know. I can't predict what Asean is going to say. We will talk to Asean countries."

Asean groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Dr Mahathir was speaking after launching the homepage and the membership directory of the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT).

Asean foreign ministers are scheduled to meet here on May 31 to discuss when to admit Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos into the regional grouping.

At their informal summit in Jakarta last year, Asean leaders decided on simultaneous admission of all the three countries into Asean.

Malaysia is hosting the Asean ministerial meeting in July and the informal Asean summit in December.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in announcing the ban on new US investment in Myanmar on Tuesday, said it would "deal a further blow to investor confidence" because of "severe repression" in the country.

Albright said Myanmar's leaders have refused to heed repeated American appeals to open a political dialogue with Myanmar's democrats, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. -- BERNAMA

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