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APEC-NEWS-OPINION

DR MAHATHIR MAY RAISE CONCERNS OVER UNFAIR OPINIONS ON MALAYSIA

By: E.Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 15 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said he would express his concern at the Apec informal summit over the manner in which people make decisions and form opinions about the economic and political situation in Malaysia without fully investigating them.

The Prime Minister said he might raise the matter at the Apec leaders' meeting here next week if others were to raise issues pertaining to Malaysia's internal affairs.

Dr Mahathir said these people really depended on media reports "which are far from being accurate."

Dr Mahathir said this when asked about Australian Prime Minister John Howard's statement recently that he intended to bring up at the leaders' meeting the manner in which former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was treated while under detention.

Asked if it was appropriate for two Canadian ministers to meet with Anwar's wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah yesterday, Dr Mahathir said he did not know it was appropriate or not.

"I have no means of setting standard for these things."

"Other people have set standards for us and we are supposed to obey."

"But if other people think that interfering in other people affairs is legitimate they are welcome to do so," he said.

Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy and Trade Minister Sergio Marchi had lunch with Dr Wan Azizah.

On the decision by the Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien to cancel his bilateral meeting with Dr Mahathir, the Prime Minister said bilateral meetings were not part of the Apec process.

It was reported that Chretien who is expected to arrive here tomorrow from Singapore would meet with Azizah on the sidelines of the Apec summit.

Apec leaders including Philippine President Joseph Estrada who were earlier reported to have said that they might meet Anwar or Azizah have since decided against it because of their busy schedule for the Apec summit.

When a foreign reporter asked Dr Mahathir if he would hold bilateral talks with Chretien during the Apec summit, Dr Mahathir said he would not.

Asked on his reaction to Chretien's concern over human rights issue in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said: "I am concern about human rights worldwide, including in Canada."

When asked in what respect he was concerned over human rights in Canada, the prime minister said: "Considering that it once belongs to the Red Indians, I do not see them being represented at Apec." -- BERNAMA

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