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Mahathir-West

I DO NOT BOW TO THE WEST- DR MAHATHIR

By: Azman Ujang

TOKYO, Oct 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight to safeguard Malaysia's interests he will continue to criticise the West without any concealment as he has been doing all this while.

The Prime Minister said he was aware that the West was uneasy over the clear and distinct way he was voicing his views on many matters pertaining to the West, but he was not concerned as he did not wish to become the darling of the West.

"If they look down on us people of the East, I also will look down on them," he said when addressing some 250 Malaysian students gathered at the Malaysian Embassy here.

Dr Mahathir who often condemned Western currency speculators for reaping huge profits by impoverishing countries in Southeast Asia such as Malaysia, said at one he was told that each time he criticised the West, the value of the Ringgit would drop.

"All my friends told me not to level accusations against the West as this will not only cause the value of the ringgit to fall but also that of other currencies in the region ," he said.

The Prime Minister said he would be blunt when talking about the actions of the West in giving a backseat to the interests of the East unlike some other leaders in the region who were engaged in veiled talk.

He said US President Bill Clinton had sought his support in a letter to him in the US efforts to fight terrorism in the aftermath of the bomb attacks on that country's embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last July.

In his reply to Clinton's letter, Dr Mahathir said he had stated that Malaysia could not support such action as the US had responded through rocket attacks on a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan.

"I was to have visited the factory in Sudan during my visit to that country in May but it did not materialise. After the rocket attacks on the factory we saw the Sudanese people encircling it. If it indeed had been producing poisonous chemicals as claimed by America, surely the Sudanese people will have been affected by it," he said.

"If the West thinks that I do not have Asian values such as being soft and gentle and that I am too often vocal in speaking about them, it's too bad," Dr Mahathir said.

Replying to a question on the role of women in Malaysia's development, the Prime Minister said that while being proud of the progress achieved by Malaysian women in various fields, he was saddened over the oppression of women in many Islamic countries.

He mentioned about the policy of the Taliban forces, which controlled most of Afghanistan, in not allowing the womenfolk to work.

He said there were some one billion Muslims in the world and if the women who formed half of that number were prevented from attaining progress, the Muslim community would become weak.

"This is because 50 per cent of the Islamic potential has not been tapped to achieve progress for Muslims," he added.

-- BERNAMA

AU AAM