

21 FEB 1998

Mahathir-Indonesia

INDONESIA SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DO WHAT IT FEELS BEST, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia respected Indonesia's independence to take whatever steps in overcoming the economic problem.

"Indonesia is an independent country and if it wants to do something, it should be allowed to do something," he told reporters after opening the annual general meeting of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) here today.

Asked if he was referring to the republic proposing to set up a currency board, Dr Mahathir said that was one of the rights of Indonesia to decide.

"But attempts to force Indonesia by pushing down the rupiah for example is a denial of the right of Indonesia to do whatever it wants," he said.

Asked if he had been in communication with President Suharto, Dr Mahathir said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had gone to see the President "to get a proper briefing and information about his plans".

Dr Mahathir had also met Suharto in Jakarta last month.

Asked what kind of consensus had been reached following his visits to a number of Asean countries to discuss the use of regional currencies for intra-Asean trade, Dr Mahathir said: "Everybody has agreed."

"We're getting them to work out the mechanics of the whole thing. Whether they use what currency, that is for them to decide," he said when asked if the plan would be implemented soon and whether the Singapore dollar would be used.

Dr Mahathir had visited Brunei on Wednesday following his trips to Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore to discuss the region's financial and economic woes with their leaders. -- BERNAMA

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