

21 AUG 1998

LEAD Mahathir-America

MAHATHIR REGRETS U.S. AIR STRIKES IN AFGHANISTAN AND SUDAN

KANGAR, Aug 21 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is disappointed that the air strikes launched by the United States in Afghanistan and Sudan yesterday had reportedly been sanctioned by the United Nations, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today..

"We are upset because the attack is said to be have been allowed by the UN, but we don't know that that UN had given its permission," he told a news conferenvce here.

He was asked to comment on the air strikes which the US said was aimed at terrorist bases in Afghanistan and Sudan believed to have been behind the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania early this month.

Washington was reported to have infomed the UN Security Council that it was exercising its legal right to defend itself as provided for by the UN Charter.

Commenting on this, Dr Mahathir said: "How are we know if they won't attack us later. They will say it's self defence too."

The Prime Minister described the US action as passing sentence and enforcing it.

"Who is the one who decides? If I can decide where I want to attack, the world will be in chaos.

"If it's a big power, it can attack anyone. It decides and it executes, making small countries feel it's dangerous to live in this world.

"We (small countries) do not dare to say anything. If we do we may be attacked," he said.

Replying to another question, Dr Mahathir expressed the hope that countries in this region would agree to the establishment of the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) especially during the current period of economic slowdown.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said actions by political parties to exploit the economic downturn for political gain were akin to opposing the objective to revive the economy.

"The people will surely not be pleased with opposition patties that only want to aggravate the situation without wanting to help revive the economy," he told Bernama when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's statement.

Abdullah, who is also Umno vice-president, said that in efforts by the people to rally support for the government to revive the economy, attempts by the opposition to cash in on the situation would not receive backing.

"We must give full support to the government, especially the prime minister...this is one way to convince everyone, be they friendly nations, investors, or businessmen, that there is unity in Malaysia to overcome the economic downturn," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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