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Mahathir-Asean

MAHATHIR NOT ATTENDING ASEAN INFORMAL SUMMIT, SAYS FM

KOTA TINGGI, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will not be attending the Asean informal summit scheduled from Nov 24 to 28 in Manila due to Malaysia holding a general election this month.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said: "The prime minister is not attending because of the general election and there is no other reason."

The country will hold its 10th general election on Nov 29 with Saturday fixed for nomination.

Syed Hamid said Dr Mahathir was indeed planning to attend the Manila informal summit as it would be Asean's last major meeting for the century.

"It's up to the prime minister to decide who will represent Malaysia at the summit," Syed Hamid told reporters after inspecting the Kota Tinggi Barisan Nasional (BN) operations room here today.

Syed Hamid is the incumbent Member of Parliament for Kota Tinggi.

Syed Hamid said he himself would also not be attending next week's ministerial meeting of Asean's third informal summit.

"Originally I'm scheduled to leave for Manila on Nov 24, but because of the general election, I have to cancel the trip," he said.

For the ministerial meeting, Malaysia will be represented by Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad and other senior officers handling financial and trade matters.

Asean finance ministers would for the first time join the ministerial meeting of the informal summit.

The Philippines is the third informal summit host after Indonesia and Malaysia.

The other Asean members are Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

-- BERNAMA

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