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Mahathir-Pakistan

MAHATHIR REGRETS COUP IN PAKISTAN

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has expressed regret over the military coup in Pakistan yesterday.

He said the military should be a professional body following the orders of the government of the day which was elected by the people.

"To me, that incident is very regrettable," he told reporters after meeting a delegation of the Malaysian British Business Council led by its co-chairmen Mirzan Mahathir and Sir Patrick Gillam, who is Standard Chartered chairman, here today.

Reports from Islamabad quoted the man behind the bloodless coup, army chief Gen Pervez Musharraf, as saying he seized power to save the country from ruin and would announce his policies soon.

Musharraf did not give details on the military's plans for Pakistan and did not say what he would do with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the man he ejected from power.

Dr Mahathir said if the military was inclined towards politics it would be quite difficult for a country to progress with a smooth administration.

Whatever faults Sharif might have, "he was still elected by the people", he said.

"Everyone must respect leaders who are elected by the people.

"If there are people who disagree with Nawaz Sharif, they should wait until the election is held," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that during an election they could use all the facilities of a democracy to elect a good leader.

"But taking over power by force is something inappropriate," he said.

Asked whether Malaysia would recognise the Pakistani administration following the coup, Dr Mahathir said: "We have to wait until we find out the actual position of this government in terms of its acceptance by the people of Pakistan."

Asked on the position of Malaysian High Commission staff in Islamabad, Dr Mahathir said there had been no reports to indicate the security situation in Pakistan was worrying.

"So they will stay put there," he said.

He also said the issue might be raised at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Durban, South Africa, early next month.

"Normally, CHOGM will decide whether they recognise (the government) or not, and we will be guided by the CHOGM decision," he said.

In KUALA LUMPUR, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said there is no plan yet to repatriate Malaysians in Pakistan following the military coup as the security situation there is reported to be under control.

He said there has been no report of any threat to Malaysians there.

"I have been informed that there has not been any report involving Malaysians and I understand the situation there is calm," he said after launching the "Dejavu Seorang Perempuan" theatre performance here today.

Syed Hamid said the government too has not received any request from Malaysians who wished to be flown home.

"We will keep in touch with our High Commission in Pakistan for the latest developments," he said.

He said the coup would not affect bilateral relations between Malaysia and Pakistan.

"It is their internal matter and I believe Pakistan will be able to

come out of the situation that they are in," said Syed Hamid.

-- BERNAMA

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