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Mahathir-Anthrax

DR M ASKS MEDIA TO REPORT ACCURATELY WITH JUSTIFIED FACTS

By: Ridzuan Zulkifli and Mohd Kamel Othman

SHANGHAI, Oct 21 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged the media to be fair in their reports because stories released based on unjustified facts would hurt the economy and business environment of a country.

The prime minister cited the Anthrax issue as an example of Malaysia being accused of exporting the deadly bacteria.

"Because of baseless reports such as this, it will affect business and the economy. No tourist would come to Malaysia except journalists who wants to actually see the bacteria," he said jokingly at a media conference at the end of the two-day Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Summit here tonight.

In the Anthrax issue, he said, a letter allegedly containing the bacteria in a gel-like substance is said to have originated from Malaysia but was actually mailed from the United States.

He said although the reports have been unconfirmed, the media had already dismissed it as true and portrayed Malaysia as an Anthrax exporter.

"This is not fair. So, in future, the media should not report something which is unconfirmed because it can potentially damage the business and economic climate of a country," he said.

Dr Mahathir also noted a media report that Malaysia Airlines (MAS) employed an Iraqi pilot, thus claiming the national carrier to be a dangerous airline to travel with.

"Are we actually going to deny one's right to employment just because he is of Iraqi origin?" he asked.

"If they are capable, why not?" he said at the press conference packed with foreign journalists.

Dr Mahathir said he regretted such reports as it would impose difficulties on many individuals and parties.

-- BERNAMA

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