

05 APR 2001

DR MAHATHIR LAMENTS U.S. SPYING ON CHINA

KUALA LUMPUR, April 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today lamented the United States' spying on China.

"I regret that there should be this incident. In the first place, it should not have happened and no country in the world would want that they be spied on," he told reporters at the end of his visit to the Information Ministry here.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the Sunday incident in which a US surveillance aircraft had to make an emergency landing in China after colliding with a Chinese fighter jet. The Chinese pilot is still reported missing.

"Spying can now be done from afar, through the use of satellites even and I hope this matter can be settled by both sides."

US and China have blamed each other for the incident.

Beijing has demanded an apology from Washington while Washington has demanded the return of the aircraft and its 24-member crew.

Latest agency reports from Beijing said China welcomed as a "step in the right direction" US statements of regret over the missing Chinese pilot and repeated its demand for a full apology.

-- BERNAMA

AFY ES THG