

24 JUL 2001

Mahathir-Indonesia

M'SIA PLEDGES ASSISTANCE FOR INDONESIAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY

KUALA LUMPUR, July 24 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is prepared to help in Indonesia's economic recovery efforts if requested, said the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said such willingness to cooperate was because Malaysia was fully aware that the impact of Indonesia's economic problems would inevitably spill over in the form of an exodus of illegal immigrants, among others.

"If we are approached, we are willing to extend cooperation to help in Indonesia's economic recovery because non-recovery shall in turn create problems relating to trade...immigrants and other aspects," Dr Mahathir said.

He was responding to reporters' questions on whether Kuala Lumpur was willing to contribute towards Indonesia's economic recovery given that a politically and economically beleaguered Indonesia could only add to Malaysia's illegal immigrant woes.

Earlier the prime minister presented the Proton World International smart card to Iris Technology Malaysia and the National Registration Department at Iris' premises at the Technology Park Malaysia in Bukit Jalil here.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that Malaysia was willing to work with whoever was chosen to lead Indonesia.

"It is a matter for Indonesians to decide. Whoever forms the government of Indonesia we will accept. We don't try evaluate which government is better and which is not... that is their right to choose whichever leader they want.

"Whoever they choose, we will be very happy to work with them," he said.

Megawati Sukarnoputri replaced Abdurrahman Wahid as Indonesia's president following yesterday's sacking of Abdurrahman by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR).

On the Asean front, Dr Mahathir said that the regional grouping had always been able to manage with leadership change in member countries such as when Joseph Estrada was replaced as Philippine president by Gloria Arroyo or when Thailand elected a new Prime Minister and now, a change in the Indonesian presidency.

-- BERNAMA

RV AHH RYN