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MALAYSIA WELCOMES EAST TIMOR'S INDEPENDENCE- DR MAHATHIR

SHAH ALAM, May 19 (Bernama) -- Malaysia welcomes the independence of East Timor, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Malaysia was very happy for East Timor and wished the country well, he told reporters after opening the 56th MIC Annual General Meeting here.

"We are very happy for East Timor which celebrates its independence tomorrow," he said.

Dr Mahathir regretted that he was unable to attend East Timor's independence celebrations as he had to leave for Japan tomorrow.

He said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar would represent Malaysia at East Timor's independence to be celebrated at its capital, Dili.

Asked whether East Timor would join Asean, Dr Mahathir said, " Malaysia very much welcomes East Timor into Asean."

East Timor will become an independent nation at the stroke of midnight tonight.

Besides Malaysia, Asean groups Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos.

--BERNAMA

RIZ AKT AAM