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Mahathir-Myanmar

SUU KYI'S RELEASE A PROGRESS TOWARDS DEMOCRACY IN MYANMAR

KUALA LUMPUR, May 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the release of pro-democracy opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi after 19 months of house arrest is a progress towards democracy in Myanmar.

Asked whether the release was a major step forward, he said: "I think it is a progress. I think we should accept it."

The prime minister was speaking to reporters after delivering his keynote address at the 35th International General Meeting of the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC), here.

Dr Mahathir also commended the Myanmar military government.

"Both sides should be commended. I don't think anything can be achieved overnight," he said.

The release of Suu Kyi by the ruling junta was a breakthrough after more than a decade of political stalemate.

The 56-year-old Nobel peace laureate has been confined to her home with her telephone line cut since September 2000 after trying to defy a government ban on travel outside the capital, Yangon.

Suu Kyi emerged as a leader of Myanmar's democracy movement in 1988 after the military suppressed anti-government protests. The military has ruled the country since 1962.

Myanmar is a member of the 10-member grouping of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). The others are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

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