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Mahathir-Asean

PM DISAPPOINTED OVER REJECTION OF ASEAN+3 SECRETARIAT PROPOSAL

KUALA LUMPUR, July 31 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed disappointment over the Asean foreign ministers' rejection of Malaysia's proposal to set up an Asean+3 secretariat in Kuala Lumpur.

"Yes, we are very disappointed that the other countries are not keen to have the secretariat. But we will continue to press for it," he said when asked on the proposal rejection on Monday at the just-concluded Asean Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Brunei.

The foreign ministers instead prefer to have a unit within the Asean secretariat in Jakarta to ensure proper coordination of Asean+3 activities.

When pointed out that some Asean countries might have perceived the idea as too "drastic", Dr Mahathir said that they were entitled to that view.

He was speaking to reporters after launching the 'Family First-Bring Your Heart Home' campaign by the Women and Family Development Ministry, here.

To a question, Dr Mahathir dismissed the notion that the creation of the new secretariat would result in the Asean secretariat losing its relevance.

"No, I don't think so. Asean is Asean and this is Asean+3," he said.

Asean+3 refers to the loose grouping of the 10 Asean member countries as well as Japan, China, and South Korea. Asean comprises Brunei, Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Laos, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam.

It was reported that Malaysia offered a seed funding of US\$10 million (RM38 million) to cover the first five years of the secretariat's operations.

On the suggestion by the United States for Malaysia to become the Southeast Asian centre for anti-terrorism activities, Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia would look into it.

"We will study what is their proposal. We'll have to know (the matter) in detail," he said.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell made the suggestion in his talks with Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar at Wisma Putra yesterday.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that Kuala Lumpur was committed in the fight against terrorism.

"And we keep our words," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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