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APEC-THAI

THAIS PAY TRIBUTE TO DR MAHATHIR ON HIS ROLE IN ASEAN

By: Arul Rajoo

BANGKOK, Oct 18 (Bernama) -- Thailand has paid tribute to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his contribution to the integration of Asean.

Thai Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai said from his observation, Dr Mahathir had contributed a lot to the region in his 22 years as prime minister.

This was especially evident from Dr Mahathir's strong support in making Asean stronger, especially in the Asean+3 partnership.

Asean is made up of 10 countries while the +3 members are China, Japan and South Korea.

During his tenure, Dr Mahathir has been instrumental in expanding the South East Asian grouping, with the entry of new members like Myanmar.

"He contributed a lot to the integration process," Surakiart said at a joint press conference with Thai Commerce Minister Adisai Bodharamik at the end of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation's (APEC) Ministerial Meeting here.

Earlier, when a journalist asked Surakiart on what he thought of Dr Mahathir, his legacy and his retirement at the end of the month, the Thai minister initially said: "It's difficult to answer. Besides, it's also not good to comment on leaders from other countries."

Dr Mahathir will arrive here tomorrow to attend the APEC leaders' informal summit.

Surakiart said since APEC would be Dr Mahathir's last international event before his retirement, he was confident the leader would give some important input during the meeting. -- BERNAMA

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