

China seems committed to COC in South China Sea - Mahathir

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By Massita Ahmad

SINGAPORE, Nov 14 (Bernama) -- China seems committed to concluding talks with Southeast Asian nations on a code of conduct in the South China Sea in three years, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here Wednesday.

The Malaysian Prime Minister said: "I think we all want to settle this problem. And I think China is committed to resolving this problem of basically the (COC in) the South China Sea in three years."

Asked if he sees any obstacles, he said: "So far, none."

Dr Mahathir spoke to reporters on the sidelines of the 33rd ASEAN Summit and related summits in the city-state.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang was quoted as saying Tuesday that Beijing hopes its talks with Southeast Asian nations on a COC in the South China Sea will bear fruit in three years.

China hopes to complete talks on the COC in the South China Sea within three years, clinching a final deal that will keep enduring peace in the region, China's Xinhua News Agency quoted Li as saying.

Joint efforts by China and ASEAN have stabilised the South China Sea. Both sides should seize the opportunity to push for substantial progress on COC talks, Li said at the 44th Singapore Lecture co-organised by the Iseas-Yusof Ishak Institute and Business China.

Dr Mahathir has said previously that it is better not to have any warship present in the Straits of Melaka and the South China Sea.

He said the presence of warships in Malaysian waters will lead to “unhealthy situations”.

Dr Mahathir was also quoted in a report in relation to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as saying: “We have no problem with that (BRI), except of course we would not like to see too many warships in this area because (a) warship attracts other warships.”

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