

ASEAN-MAHATHIR

78 (P)
KUALA LUMPUR, DEC. 14 (BERNAMA)—ASEAN MAY CONSIDER RE-TALIATORY MEASURES IF ITS EFFORTS TO GET AUSTRALIA TO REVIEW ITS NEW CIVIL AVIATION POLICY ARE FRUSTRATED, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TONIGHT.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SAID: +WE HAVE NOT COME TO THE STAGE YET WHEN WE HAVE TO CONSIDER SUCH MEASURES. BUT WE MAY IF WE FIND OURSELVES TERRIBLY FRUSTRATED.+

HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE CURRENT ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS MEETING HERE WOULD ARRIVE AT A JOINT STAND IN THE ASEAN-AUSTRALIA AIR TALK TO BE HELD IN CANBERRA SHORTLY.

+WE ARE VERY CONCERNED OVER THE NEW AIR ARRANGEMENT WHICH WOULD AFFECT TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION AS WELL AS THE INTERESTS OF THE SMALL AIRLINES,+ HE ADDED.

UNDER THE NEW POLICY, WANTAS AND BRITISH AIRWAYS ARE OFFERING LOW-PRICED SERVICES BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND BRITAIN WITHOUT ALLOWING STOPOVERS OR ALLOWING THEM ONLY AFTER IMPOSING STEEP SURCHARGES.

SINGAPORE, WHICH WOULD BE THE HARDEST-HIT BY THE ARRANGEMENT, CLAIMED THAT ITS 200,000 AUSTRALIAN TOURISTS TO THE ISLAND WOULD BE HALVED.

—BERNAMA MORE 2055/AH.

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DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE FIVE ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS HAD A CLOSED-DOOR MEETING ON THE ISSUE THIS AFTERNOON WITHOUT THEIR AIDES.

HE SAID THE TALKS ON THE SUBJECT WOULD CONTINUE TOMORROW TO IRON OUT A FEW MORE ISSUES IN ORDER TO REACH A JOINT APPROACH ON THE MATTER.

HE SAID THAT THE ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH JAPAN'S PROPOSED JAPANESE-ASEAN COOPERATION CENTRE ON TRADE, TOURISM AND INVESTMENT AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE EXISTING SEAP-CENTRE.

+WE FEEL THAT THE BODY IN THE FORM SUGGESTED BY JAPAN WOULD NOT BENEFIT US AND THERE IS NEED TO RENEGOTIATE THE PROPOSAL,+ HE SAID.

THE ASEAN SECRETARY-GENERAL, DATUK HAJI ALI ABDULLAH, HAD BEEN ASKED TO CARRY OUT THE RENEGOTIATIONS.

—BERNAMA MORE 2059/AH

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DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR ALSO SAID THAT 500 NEW ITEMS HAD BEEN ADDED TO THE LIST OF GOODS UNDER THE PREFERENTIAL TRADING ARRANGEMENT (PTA), BRINGING THE TOTAL NUMBER TO 1,326.

HE SAID THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND TOURISM HAD BEEN ASKED TO REVIEW THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PTA TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER THERE WAS NEED TO ENLARGE THE NUMBER OF ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED OR WHETHER THE 10 PERCENT ACROSS THE BOARD TARIFF CUT WAS SUFFICIENT.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SAID THE CURRENT MEETING ALSO REVIEWED THE PROGRESS OF THE FIVE ASEAN INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS OF WHICH THE TWO UREA PROJECTS FOR MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA WERE EXPECTED TO BE FINALISED IN THE CURRENT MEETING.

+WE ARE VERY, VERY KEEN TO GO AHEAD WITH THE ASEAN PROJECTS BUT WE WANT THEM TO BE TRULY VIABLE AND NOT MERELY FOR PRESTIGE,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR ALSO SAID THAT THE MEETING ALSO REVIEWED THE TRADE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EEC, THE UNITED STATES, JAPAN, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND.

+BY AND LARGE WE FOUND THAT OUR DIALOGUES WITH THEM HAD BROUGHT NOTHING SUBSTANTIAL BEYOND KNOWING THE PROBLEMS AND EACH OTHER'S ATTITUDES.+ —BERNAMA MORE 2103/AH

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DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR ANNOUNCED THAT THE MEETING HAD AGREED ON THE SETTING UP OF 50,000 METRIC TONS OF RICE UNDER THE FOOD SECURITY STOCKPILE SCHEME.

HE SAID THE MINISTERS HAD DIRECTED THAT ACCESS TO SUCH A STOCKPILE SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE WITHIN TWO DAYS IN TIMES OF EMERGENCY.

—BERNAMA 2105/AH