

MAHATHIR-EDITORIAL

FROM MERVIN NAMBIAR

BANGKOK, DEC. 8 (BERNAMA) -- (DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD) IS A LOYAL ALLY AND PRAGMATIST FROM WHOM THAILAND CAN EXPECT FRIENDSHIP AND FULL COOPERATION, THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY, THE BANGKOK POST, SAID TODAY.

IN A LENGTHY EDITORIAL THE PAPER DESCRIBED THE MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER, WHO IS SCHEDULED TO FLY IN THIS AFTERNOON ON A TWO-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT, AS ONE OF THAILAND'S CLOSEST ALLIES WHOSE COLOURFUL RISE AND FALL AND ABRUPT REEMERGENCE IN POLITICS STUNNED EVEN THE MOST SEASONED OBSERVER.

THE PAPER SAID THAT IF THE MISCONCEPTIONS WROUGHT BY ZEALOUS REPORTERS AND POORLY INFORMED SOURCES WERE CLEARED UP, ONE WOULD FIND IN DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR +A HARDWORKING AND HONEST LEADER, AN EXTREMELY RARE BREED IN THE VICIOUS WORLD OF POLITICS.+

THE PAPER ADDED THAT UNFORTUNATELY UNINFORMED OUTSIDERS HAD DESCRIBED THE MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER AND THE BOOK, THE MALAY DILEMMA, WHICH HE WROTE IN 1970, AS RACIST. -- MORE 1445/PA
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+ON CLOSER READING, HOWEVER, ONE WILL FIND THE AUTHOR IS MORE CRITICAL OF THE MALAYS THEMSELVES, THAN THE ECONOMICALLY BETTER OFF MINORITIES.+

THE PAPER SAID THAT AS A +COURAGEOUS PRAGMATIST,+ DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR WAS WILLING TO PUT UP WITH THE OPPOSITION INCLUDING PAS, MUCH AS HE DISAGREED WITH THE PARTY'S VIEWS AND RELIANCE ON RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS FOR SUPPORT.

THE PAPER ALSO TOOK TO TASK THOSE WHO HAD CRITICISED MALAYSIA'S POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES.

IT SAID THAT LAST YEAR MALAYSIA PROVIDED TEMPORARY SHELTER FOR 159,629 REFUGERS WHILE FIGURES RELEASED BY REFUGEE AGENCIES SHOWED THAT MALAYSIA LAST MONTH PROVIDED SHELTER FOR THE SECOND LARGEST NUMBER OF BOAT PEOPLE. -- MORE 1450/PA
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+THESE FIGURES SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES,+ THE PAPER SAYS.

THE PAPER SAID THAT DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR HAD PERSONALLY REAFFIRMED MALAYSIA'S COMMITMENT TO BATTLE INSURGENCY AND TERRORISM ALONG THE TWO COUNTRIES COMMON BORDER AFTER SENIOR THAI OFFICIALS HAD SAID THAT THEY WERE NOT VERY SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE RECENT GENERAL BORDER COMMITTEE MEETING.

THE PAPER NOTED THAT PRIME MINISTER GEN. PREM TINSULANONDA CAME OUT IN FULL SUPPORT OF DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR'S ASSURANCE CONVEYED THROUGH FOREIGN MINISTER SIDDHI SAVETSILA.

-- BERNAMA 1451/PA