

MAHATHIR-FRENCH

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KUALA LUMPUR, DEC. 13 (BERNAMA) -- MALAYSIA TODAY FORMALLY REQUESTED THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO RELAX ITS RECENT RULING REQUIRING ALL CUSTOMS DOCUMENTS OF IMPORTS INTO FRANCE TO BE WRITTEN IN FRENCH.

PRIME MINISTER/DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD MADE THE REQUEST DURING DISCUSSIONS WITH HIS FRENCH COUNTERPART, ENCIK PIERRE MAUROY, AT HIS OFFICE TODAY.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THAT THE RULING COULD HAMPER THE FREE FLOW OF MALAYSIAN GOODS INTO FRANCE.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, TAN SRI ZAKARIA ALI, TOLD REPORTERS AFTER THE MEETING THAT THE SUBJECT WAS FIRST BROUGHT UP BY THE FRENCH THEMSELVES.

HE SAID ENCIK MAUROY EXPLAINED THAT THE RULING WAS TO EXERT THE IDENTITY OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN FRENCH TRADING.

'WE UNDERSTOOD THEIR EXPLANATIONS BUT WE HOPED THAT THIS WOULD NOT IN ANY WAY HAMPER THE FREE FLOW OF GOODS INTO FRANCE,' TAN SRI ZAKARIA QUOTED DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR AS SAYING.

-- MORE 1704/LK

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ASKED WHETHER MALAYSIA HAD PRESSURED THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT INTO ACCEDING TO THE MALAYSIAN REQUEST WITH REGARD TO THE RULING, TAN SRI ZAKARIA SAID THE MATTER WAS NOT RAISED SPECIFICALLY.

MALAYSIA RECENTLY DEPLORED THE ACT AS 'A KIND OF NON-TARIFF AND DEVIATE DEVICE' ADOPTED BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO CARRY OUT ITS PROTECTIONIST POLICY.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER TENGGU RITHAUDDEEN WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE ACT WAS DEPLORABLE WHEN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES LIKE MALAYSIA WERE FIGHTING FOR FREE TRADE WITHIN THE PRINCIPLES AND NORM OF THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFF AND TRADE (GATT).

THE NEW RULING WHICH CAME INTO EFFECT ON DEC. 2 MEANT THAT FRENCH WOULD BE USED IN ALL DOCUMENTS, INCLUDING CONTRACTS, CATALOGUES, BANKING AND TRANSPORT DOCUMENTS, INSURANCE PAPERS AND QUARANTEE CERTIFICATES.

FRENCH IS ALSO A MUST FOR LABELLING, PAMPHLETS, ORDER FORMS, DELIVERY FORMS, INSTRUCTION NOTIVES AND ADVERTISING.

-- MORE 1708/LK

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DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR ALSO BRIEFED THE FRENCH DELEGATION ON MALAYSIA'S INDUSTRIALISATION POLICY, ESPECIALLY ITS DESIRE TO LESSEN THE DEPENDENCE ON COMMODITY EARNINGS AND ATTAIN A HIGH LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ITS INDUSTRIALISATION PROGRAMMES.

HE ALSO REITERATED MALAYSIA'S REGRET THAT THE PROTECTIONIST POLICY BY DEVELOPED COUNTRIES HAD AFFECTED THE NATION'S TRADE AND INVESTMENT AS WELL THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN GENERAL.

TAN SRI ZAKARIA SAID FRANCE WAS KEEN TO RECTIFY THIS BY INCREASING ITS ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN MALAYSIA'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES, INCLUDING TRANSPORT AND HOUSING.

HE ADDED THAT DETAILS OF TRADE EXPANSION BETWEEN BOTH COUNTRIES WOULD BE FURTHER DISCUSSED BETWEEN MALAYSIA'S TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER TENGKU AHMAD RITHAUDDEEN AND FRANCE'S DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL COMMERCE ENCIK MICHEL JOBERT.

-- BERNAMA 1730/LK