

MAHATHIR - VISIT

FROM EFFENDI ARIFFIN

WASHINGTON, JAN 20 (BERNAMA) -- MALAYSIA'S MOVE TO UPGRADE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES WILL NOT BE MADE AT THE EXPENSE OF HER NEUTRAL IDENTITY, PRIME MINISTER/DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID.

HE TOLD MALAYSIAN JOURNALISTS COVERING HIS CURRENT OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES YESTERDAY THAT MALAYSIA WAS A NEUTRAL COUNTRY AND A MEMBER OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT.

+WE DO NOT WANT TO QUARREL WITH THE UNITED STATES JUST BECAUSE WE ARE IN THE NON-ALIGNED*+ HE ADDED.

+WHERE WE CAN COOPERATE, WE WILL COOPERATE WITHOUT LOSING OUR IDENTITY .+

HE SAID HE WAS SATISFIED WITH THE SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS HE HAD WITH AMERICAN LEADERS INCLUDING PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN AT THE WHITE HOUSE HERE YESTERDAY.

HE AND PRESIDENT REAGAN HAD TOUCHED ON THE ISSUE OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AND WAYS OF SOLVING THE PROBLEM.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR POINTED OUT THAT THE OUTFLOW OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM VIETNAM WOULD INCREASE IF THEY FELT THEY COULD GAIN ENTRY INTO THIRD COUNTRIES BY COMING TO MALAYSIA. -- MORE 1117/SA

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+THIS WILL ONLY COMPOUND THE PROBLEM,+ HE ADDED.

HE SAID THE ISSUE OF THE VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE WAS A +DELICATE+ ONE AND MALAYSIA WOULD HAVE TO THINK CAREFULLY ON HOW TO GO ABOUT RESOLVING THE PROBLEM.

ON PURCHASE OF MALAYSIAN RUBBER BY THE UNITED STATES FOR ITS STOCKPILE, WHOSE RELEASES COULD DISRUPT THE MARKET: THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE BELIEVED THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT BUY SO MUCH EXCESS RUBBER AS IT HAD OTHER MATERIALS TO BUY AS WELL.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR ALSO HAD TALKS WITH LEADING AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN AND MEMBERS OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HERE AND IN NEW YORK IN WHICH GREAT INTEREST WAS SHOWN IN INVESTMENT POTENTIAL IN MALAYSIA.

HE DESCRIBED HIS UNITED STATES TRIP AS BEING SUCCESSFUL ON THE WHOLE, SAYING THAT AMERICAN LEADERS HAD APPRECIATED THE PROBLEMS FACED BY MALAYSIA IN BRINGING DEVELOPMENT TO THE PEOPLE.

ON HIS CANADIAN VISIT LAST WEEK, HE SAID IT HAD ENABLED HIM TO CONVEY INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN MALAYSIA TO CANADIAN PREMIER PIERRE ELLIOT TRUDEAU AND HELPED STRENGTHEN TIES BETWEEN MALAYSIAN AND CANADA. -- MORE 1125/SA

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THE VISIT HAD ALSO OPENED UP THE POSSIBILITY OF SENDING MALAYSIAN TO THE BUTLER METALS COMPANY THERE TO LEARN MANUFACTURE OF COMPONENTS FOR THE MALAYSIAN NATIONAL CAR PROJECT.

THE COMPANY IS A SUBSIDIARY OF THE GUTHRIE GROUP AND PRODUCES COMPONENTS FOR THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.

THE PRIME MINISTER IS SCHEDULED FOR A DIALOGUE WITH THE WASHINGTON UMNO CLUB TODAY AND A MEETING WITH U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE GEORGE SHULTZ.

HE WILL WIND UP HIS U.S. VISIT TOMORROW AND FLY TO EUROPE FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO FRANCE AND SWITZERLAND ACCOMPANIED BY DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR. SITIHASHMAH AND THE 20-MEMBER MALAYSIAN DELEGATION. -- BERNAMA 1130/SA