

RE941 DES COR

MAHATHIR-MAS

KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 17 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY CRITICIZED BRITAIN FOR REFUSING TO GRANT AN EXTRA LONDON FLIGHT TO THE MALAYSIAN AIRLINE SYSTEM (MAS).

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE NATIONAL CARRIER SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO MOUNT REGULAR SERVICES TO MAJOR DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD INCLUDING LONDON.

HE EXPRESSED MALAYSIA'S REGRET OVER THE BRITISH CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITIES' REFUSAL TO ALLOW HAS TO OPERATE AN EXTRA LONDON FLIGHT AT THE SEMINAR ON MALAYSIAN-BRITISH INVISIBLE TRADE LINKS HERE.

THE TWO DAY SEMINAR, JOINTLY, ORGANIZED BY THE BRITISH INVISIBLE EXPORTS COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL OF MALAYSIAN INVISIBLE TRADE IS ATTENDED BY OVER 300 INDUSTRIALISTS AND BUSINESSMEN OF BOTH COUNTRIES INCLUDING A 17 MEMBER DELEGATION FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM AND TWO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BRITISH INVISIBLE EXPORTS COUNCIL.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF CALCULATING FLIGHT FREQUENCY DEMANDS BASED ON PERFORMANCE WITHOUT PROPER CONSIDERATION OF A MULTITUDE OF OTHER EQUALLY IMPORTANT FACTORS WOULD NOT BRING ABOUT 'EQUITABILITY' FOR COUNTRIES LIKE MALAYSIA. --MORE

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MAHATHIR-MAS 2 KUALA LUMPUR

+ WHEN WE HAD NO AIRLINE EVERYONE WAS FREE TO CARRY OUR PASSENGERS AND GOODS. NOW THAT WE HAVE AN AIRLINE, THE RULES OF THE GAME HAVE BEEN CHANGED AGAIN AND AGAIN TO OUR DISADVANTAGE.\*

DR MAHATHIR'S CRITICISM CAME IN THE WAKE OF THE RECENT STATEMENT BY THE BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT, DAVID MITCHELL, THAT BRITAIN WAS READY TO AUTHORIZE ADDITIONAL FLIGHTS, BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM IF THEY ARE JUSTIFIED UNDER THE ARRANGEMENTS AGREED BETWEEN THE AERONAUTICAL AUTHORITIES IN REFERENCE TO THE RELEVANT TRAFFIC FLOWS.

HE HAD TOLD THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT THAT THE FOUR ROUND-TRIP SERVICES BY MAS AND AN EQUAL NUMBER BY BA (BRITISH AIRWAYS) WERE CURRENTLY AUTHORIZED.

ACCORDING TO HIM, THERE ARE INSUFFICIENT PASSENGERS WANTING TO TRAVEL BETWEEN THESE TWO COUNTRIES TO WARRANT ADDITIONAL FLIGHTS.

THIS STATEMENT HAS TRIGGERED OPPOSITION FROM VARIOUS QUARTERS HERE INCLUDING THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY WHICH CHARGED BRITAIN WITH APPLYING DOUBLE STANDARDS IN CALCULATING THE LOAD CAPACITY AS A FACTOR IN THE REQUEST BY HAS FOR INCREASED FLIGHT FREQUENCY TO LONDON. --MORE

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MAS CONTENDED THAT STATISTICS HAD SHOWN THAT THE MALAYSIAN-BRITISH AIR AGREEMENT ALLOWED FOR ADDITIONAL FREQUENCIES IF THE COMBINED POOLED LOAD FACTOR EXCEEDED 67 PERCENT.

EXPLAINING MALAYSIA'S POLICY IN PROMOTING TOURISM, DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT THE PROMOTION OF TOURISM AS A MATTER OF NATIONAL PRIORITY WAS SET IN THE CONTEXT OF A BALANCED PROMOTION TO ATTRACT DOMESTIC TRAVELLERS, REGIONAL TOURISTS AND LONG DISTANCE TOURISTS.

THE PRIME MINISTER ADDED THAT DECISIONS HAD BEEN TAKEN TO IMPROVE THE APPROPRIATE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR TRAVEL BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND HER NEIGHBOURS, AS WELL AS TO PROVIDE FOR QUALITY ACCOMMODATION AND RECREATION FACILITIES IN MALAYSIA.

HE EMPHASIZED THAT A NECESSARY INGREDIENT OF THE TOURIST PROMOTION PROGRAMME IS THE EXPANSION OF THE FLIGHT FREQUENCY AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD.

IT IS THEREFORE OF THE HIGHEST PRIORITY THAT OUR NATIONAL AIR CARRIER, THE MALAYSIAN AIRLINE SYSTEM, IS ALLOWED TO MOUNT REGULAR SERVICES TO MAJOR DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD INCLUDING LONDON, TOKYO, SYDNEY, AND BOTH COASTS OF THE UNITED STATES. --MORE

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DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT AMONG THE MANY INVISIBLE, AGGRESSIVE PROMOTION OF TOURISM BY FAR OFFERED THE BEST PROSPECTS FOR SIGNIFICANT AND EARLY RESULTS.

EXCLUDING PASSENGER FARES, MALAYSIANS SPENT \$2.1 BILLION ON TRAVEL AND EDUCATION ABROAD, INWARD TOURISM EARNED ABOUT ONE HALF THIS AMOUNT LAST YEAR.

HOWEVER, HE LAMENTED THAT COMPARED WITH OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES, MALAYSIA HAD YET TO EXPLOIT ITS FULL POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM - NOT JUST FROM OVERSEAS TRAVELLERS, BUT FROM MALAYSIAN TRAVELLERS AS WELL WHICH, HE ADDED, WOULD SAVE ON VALUABLE FOREIGN EXCHANGE.

TO APPROACH THIS VAST AREA EFFECTIVELY, THE PRIME MINISTER SUGGESTED THAT LARGE SCALE PLANNING BE UNDERTAKEN AT NATIONAL LEVEL TO ENSURE THE TWO-EDGED SWORD OF TOURISM WAS PROMOTED SYSTEMATICALLY AND PURPOSEFULLY, CONSISTENT WITH THE PRESERVATION OF NATIONAL VALUES AND THE NATION'S CULTURAL HERITAGE.

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MAHATHIR-MAS 5 KUALA LUMPUR

THE PRIME MINISTER HAS THIS MESSAGE TO IMPART TO ALL MALAYSIANS: +IF WE WANT TO CONTINUE BUYING IMPORTED GOODS AND SERVICES, SUSTAIN IT BY EXPORTING MORE - NOT JUST GOODS BUT SERVICES AS WELL.

+IF WE WISH TO CONTINUE TRAVELLING OVERSEAS YEAR IN AND YEAR OUT, WE NEED TO ATTRACT MORE NON-MALAYSIANS TO VISIT OUR SCENIC BEACHES AND OUR NATIONAL PARKS, TASTE OUR VARIETY OF FOODS, AND ENJOY OUR CULTURAL DIVERSITY. +

HE SAID THE NATION NEEDED INFLOWS OF TOURIST RECEIPTS TO PAY FOR HER TOURIST SPENDING ABROAD AS NO COUNTRY AND NO PEOPLE COULD AFFORD TO IMPORT AND ENJOY THE GOOD LIFE WITHOUT PUTTING IN THE NECESSARY EFFORT AND INVESTMENT TO EARN THE MEANS TO PAY FOR THEM.

+INDEED, THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE BEFORE US RESTS CRUCIALLY ON OUR ABILITY TO FIRST CONTAIN, AND LATER REDUCE, THE GROWING SERVICES DEFICIT, + HE ADDED.

IN REGARD TO TOURISM, DR MAHATHIR SAID THE STRATEGY TO ARREST THE GROWING SERVICES DEFICIT WAS BY ENCOURAGING MALAYSIANS TO TRAVEL MORE IN MALAYSIA RATHER THAN ABROAD AND BY ATTRACTING MORE AND MORE FOREIGN TOURISTS, ESPECIALLY FROM NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES, TO VISIT THIS COUNTRY. --BERNAMA

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