

U E414 AAE
CELEBRATIONS
FROM SYED JAMIL JAAFAR.

'84 P

MALE (MALDIVES), NOV. 11 (BERNAMA) -- THOUSANDS OF MALDIVIANS THROGGED THE STREETS OF THEIR CAPITAL CITY TODAY TO CELEBRATE REPUBLIC DAY AND THE OPENING OF THE GRAND FRIDAY MOSQUE AND ISLAMIC CENTRE.

ALTHOUGH IT RAINED HEAVILY AND MOST OF THE ROADS WERE FLOODED, THE PEOPLE CAME OUT IN FULL FORCE TO REJOICE IN THE OCCASION.

THE STREETS WERE DECORATED WITH ARCHES, FLAGS AND BUNTING. BANNERS STRUNG ACROSS THEM WELCOMED DIGNITARIES FROM 10 COUNTRIES, INCLUDING GUEST-OF-HONOUR MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

SEVERAL OF THE BANNERS CARRIED THE WORD +KAMIMENGUCAPKAN KEMAKMURAN, KEMAJUAN DAN KEAMANAN KEPADA MALAYSIA+ (WE WISH MALAYSIA PROSPERITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE) AND +MALAYSIA-MALDIVES BROTHERS IN ISLAM+.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS ACCORDED THE GREAT HONOUR TO ADDRESS THE GATHERING BEFORE THE SPEECH BY THE MALDIVES PRESIDENT, MAUMOON ABDUL GAYOOM.

ACCORDING TO MALDIVES FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS, THIS HONOUR WAS IN RECOGNITION OF DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR'S CONCERN FOR THE SMALLER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND HIS EMPHASIS ON ISLAMIC UNITY.

MALAYSIA IS SEEN HERE AS A SPECIAL FRIEND AND AMONG THE PEOPLE, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR IS NOW A FAMILIAR NAME.

PRESIDENT MAUMOON GAYOOM RECORDED A +SPECIAL DEBT OF GRATITUDE+ TO DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR FOR HIS INTEREST IN THE MOSQUE PROJECT.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMPLEX BEGAN EXACTLY TWO YEARS AGO AND SCORED SEVERAL +FIRSTS+ FOR MALAYSIA.

THIS IS THE FIRST SUCH A PROJECT IS UNDERTAKEN BY MALAYSIANS OVERSEAS. IT IS ALSO SAID TO BE THE FIRST +FLOATING+ MOSQUE AS IT IS PERCHED ON A TWO-METRE CONCRETE SLAB.

ACCORDING TO ARCHITECT HAJEEDAR, AN APPLICATION HAD BEEN MADE TO ENTER THE COMPLEX IN THE GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS AS THE BIGGEST MAN-MADE STRUCTURE IN THE MID-INDIAN OCEAN REGION.

THE COMPLEX OCCUPIES 6,750 SQ. METRES OF THIS TWO SQ. KM ATOLL. ITS MAIN CHAMBER CAN ACCOMMODATE 4,500 PEOPLE.

--BERNAMA