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B E477 AAE
MAHATHIR-SINGAPORE R'R'R'

86
JOHOR BAHRU, NOV 20 (BERNAMA) -- THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS CLOSELY MONITORING +RECENT DEVELOPMENTS+ THAT CAN HAVE A BEARING ON ITS TIES WITH SINGAPORE AND WILL TAKE THE +APPROPRIATE ACTIONS+ IF NECESSARY, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

COMMENTING ON MALAYSIAN PROTESTS OVER ISRAELI PRESIDENT CHAIM HERZOG'S VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID:

+I WILL KEEP WATCH FOR ANY REPERCUSSIONS (IN TRADE, POLITICAL AND THE SOCIAL ASPECTS) FOLLOWING THE PROTESTS. ONLY THEN WILL WE DECIDE OUR NEXT COURSE OF ACTION.+

HE BRUSHED ASIDE SUGGESTIONS THAT KUALA LUMPUR-SINGAPORE TIES WERE NOW TENSE, BUT SAID THEY +ARE NOW NOT AS GOOD AS BEFORE.+

THE PRIME MINISTER WAS SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AT THE END OF HIS ONE-DAY VISIT TO JOHOR, PART OF A NATIONWIDE TOUR TO EXPLAIN GOVERNMENT POLICIES. -- MORE

1934MST 20 11 86

D737

B E478 AAE
MAHATHIR-SINGAPORE 2 JOHOR BAHRU R'R'R'

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE WAS NOT INFORMED EARLIER BY THE SINGAPORE AUTHORITIES ABOUT HERZOG'S VISIT.

+THEY MIGHT HAVE INFORMED WISMA PUTRA, BUT I DO NOT REMEMBER BEING INFORMED ABOUT IT...I READ ABOUT IT IN THE PAPERS.+

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE SUBJECT WAS NOT BROUGHT UP IN HIS TALKS WITH HIS SINGAPORE COUNTERPART, ENCIK LEE KUAN YEW, DURING THE LATTER'S VISIT TO KUALA LUMPUR IN AUGUST.

TO ANOTHER QUESTION, HE SAID HE HAD NO PLANS TO MEET ENCIK LEE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

ON THE MEMORANDA SUBMITTED BY VARIOUS GROUPS URGING THE GOVERNMENT TO ACT AGAINST SINGAPORE, HE SAID: +WE HAVE RECEIVED MANY MEMORANDA, INCLUDING ONE TODAY FROM THE JOHOR BRANCH OF THE MALAYSIAN PEOPLE'S ACTION COMMITTEE, AND THE CONTENTS ARE MOSTLY THE SAME. WE WILL TAKE ANY ACTION WE CONSIDER NECESSARY.+ -- MORE
1936MST 20 11 86

D738

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MAHATHIR-SINGAPORE 3 JOHOR BAHRU R'R'R'

ON DEMANDS BY SOME OF THE GROUPS THAT THE GOVERNMENT REVIEW THE WATER PACT WITH SINGAPORE, HE SAID: +I DO NOT SEE ANYTHING OF THAT NATURE BEING REVIEWED AT THE MOMENT. WE HAVE NOT REACHED THAT STAGE.+

TO A QUESTION WHETHER THE ISSUE WOULD BLOW OVER, HE SAID: +IT ALL DEPENDS. IT DEPENDS ON EACH OTHER'S (SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA) REACTION.+

ASKED TO COMMENT ON A STATEMENT BY A SINGAPORE SENIOR MINISTER THAT EVEN NOW THE ARAB STATES WANT TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH ISRAEL, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID: +HE IS ENTITLED TO SAY WHAT HE LIKES, WE DON'T CARE WHAT HIS OPINION IS, ABOUT HISTORY OR ANYTHING ELSE.+

HE ALSO SAID THE HERZOG ISSUE WOULD HAVE NO EFFECT ON NEXT YEAR'S ASEAN SUMMIT IN MANILA, ADDING: +THE ASEAN SUMMIT IS THE ASEAN SUMMIT. I DON'T THINK IT WILL HAVE ANY EFFECT.+ -- MORE

1937MST 20 11 86

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MAHATHIR-SINGAPORE 4 JOHOR BAHRU R'R'R'

ASKED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THE PROPOSED GAS SALES TO SINGAPORE, HE SAID: +WE ARE STUDYING WHETHER TO SELL OR NOT TO SELL. THERE IS NO SALES AND PURCHASE AGREEMENT YET.

+IT WAS JUST AN EXPRESSION ON THE PART OF SINGAPORE'S DESIRE TO BUY GAS FROM HERE. WE ALSO EXTENDED OUR INTENTION TO SELL THE GAS TO SINGAPORE IF IT IS WILLING TO BUY.+

TO A QUESTION WHY THE GOVERNMENT HAD DELAYED OFFICIALLY PROTESTING THE HERZOG VISIT, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID: +I DON'T SEE IT THAT WAY. WE HAD TO FIND OUT FIRST THE RAKYAT'S FEELINGS ON THE ISSUE. AND SINCE THE RAKYAT HAD VOICED THEIR PROTEST, THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO FOLLOW SUIT.+

(DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER DATUK ABDUL KADIR SHEIKH FADZIR HAD SUMMONED SINGAPORE HIGH COMMISSIONER MAURICE BAKER TO WISMA PUTRA ON TUESDAY, THE DAY ENCIK HERZOG ARRIVED IN SINGAPORE TO BEGIN A THREE-DAY VISIT, TO EXPRESS MALAYSIA'S DEEP REGRET OVER THE REPUBLIC'S +PROVOCATIVE+ ACTION.)

TO A SUGGESTION THAT SINGAPORE MIGHT HAVE CANCELLED THE HERZOG VISIT IF MALAYSIA HAD STATED ITS STAND EARLIER, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID: +I DON'T KNOW. IT IS ALWAYS EASIER TO SAY AFTER THE EVENT. BEFORE THE EVENT, NOTHING IS CONSISTENT.

TO A QUESTION ABOUT HOW MALAYSIA WOULD NOW VIEW FIJI AND TONGA WHICH WERE ALSO VISITED BY THE ISRAELI LEADER AND WHICH RECEIVED TECHNICAL COOPERATION FROM MALAYSIA, HE SAID: +WE TAKE RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES VERY SERIOUSLY.

+WE DON'T MAKE DECISIONS AT THE SNAP OF OUR FINGERS. WE HAVE TO KNOW VERY WELL WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT BEFORE WE MAKE ANY DECISION.+

EARLIER, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HIS MEETINGS WITH STATE UMNO AND BARISAN NASIONAL LEADERS AS WELL AS WITH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WERE +QUITE FRUITFUL.+

HE SAID HE BRIEFED THEM ON THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC WOES AND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM.

THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS WIFE LEFT FOR MELAKA FOR A SIMILAR ONE-DAY VISIT STARTING TOMORROW. -- BERNAMA

2014MST 20 11 86