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KUALA LUMPUR, APRIL 22 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TOLD A DELEGATION OF VISITING BRITISH PARLIAMENTARIANS TODAY THAT MALAYSIA'S RELATIONS WITH BRITAIN HAVE IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY SINCE THE VISIT HERE BY HIS BRITISH COUNTERPART, PUAN MARGARET THATCHER, LAST YEAR.

A WISMA PUTRA SPOKESMAN SAID DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO EXPRESSED HIS DESIRE FOR GREATER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO EXPLAINED TO THE THREE PARLIAMENTARIANS, WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, WHY MALAYSIA ADOPTED THE +BUY BRITISH LAST+ POLICY WHEN THEY CALLED ON HIM AT HIS OFFICE HERE.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THE PRIME MINISTER HAD MENTIONED THAT PUAN THATCHER'S VISIT HERE WAS THE FIRST EVER BY A BRITISH LEADER, 28 YEARS AFTER MALAYSIA GAINED INDEPENDENCE.

THE PRIME MINISTER HAD ALSO SAID THAT BRITAIN HAD TAKEN MALAYSIA FOR GRANTED AND THAT DESPITE MALAYSIA'S NEED FOR MANPOWER TO DEVELOP THE COUNTRY, BRITAIN HAD INCREASED THE FEES FOR STUDENTS WANTING TO PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION THERE. -- MORE
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HE HAD TOLD THEM THAT PUAN THATCHER'S VISIT HERE HAD BROUGHT ABOUT IMPROVED RELATIONS.

THE DELEGATION, LED BY ENCIK PETER THOMAS, ARE ON A FACT-FINDING MISSION TO THE REGION AND THEIR ASSESSMENT ON THE STATE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS OF THE COUNTRIES THAT THEY VISIT WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

THE OTHER MEMBERS ARE ENCIK IVAN LAWRENCE AND ENCIK NIGEL SPEARING, A LABOUR MP.

MEANWHILE, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER DATUK ABDUL KADIR SHEIKH FADZIR TOLD NEWSMEN AFTER A 30-MINUTE DISCUSSION WITH THE PARLIAMENTARIANS THAT THEY HAD AGREED THAT BRITAIN HAD LOST A +TREMENDOUS RESERVOIR OF GOODWILL+ FOLLOWING ITS DECISION TO INCREASE THE STUDENTS' FEES.

HE HAD ALSO TOLD THEM THAT THERE WAS A NEED TO PUSH THE COMMONWEALTH INTO A ROLE THAT PROMOTED CLOSER COOPERATION AMONG ITS MEMBERS. -- MORE
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+WE AGREED THAT THIS POTENTIAL ROLE FOR THE COMMONWEALTH MUST BE PURSUED,+ HE SAID.

DATUK ABDUL KADIR SAID HE ALSO TOLD THEM THAT THE +NOISES+ THAT MALAYSIA MADE ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES LIKE PALESTINE, SOUTH AFRICA AND THE US BOMBING OF LIBYA WERE BASED ON IMPORTANT INTERNATIONALLY-ACCEPTED PRINCIPLES.

+THEY SHOULD JUDGE US BY OUR TRACK RECORD ON THE QUESTION OF FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND THE FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM ON WHICH WE SHARE COMMON VIEWS AND PRACTICE,+ HE SAID.

THE PARLIAMENTARIANS ARRIVED HERE FROM JAKARTA LAST NIGHT FOR A FOUR-DAY VISIT. -- BERNAMA
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