

PM: Bilateral woes due to lack of understanding

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From HARDEV KAUR

LONDON, Mon. — The lack of understanding of the British about Malaysia is the main problem in bilateral relations and this needs to be corrected.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said if this was not done, "it becomes a constant cause of irritation which is not good for our relations.

"We perceive the British as being unduly critical of Malaysia, its economy and politics forgetting, it would seem to me, that this is not Britain," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was a developing country. It had problems which were partly the result of having been a British colony.

"We have a multi-racial population and that requires careful handling. Any tilt will just make things difficult," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Britain had no experience of having half its population of a different ethnic group. "You are only now beginning to experience this, but still only a minute fraction of Britain is made up of unassimilable immigrants. Already you are finding problems.

"Just imagine how big a problem it would be if 50 per cent of Britain's population was made up of Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis, all of them claiming the right to retain their own language, not to speak English, etc, etc," he said.

Protectionism

He said these were problems which Malaysia expected Britain to understand as they were partly created by Britain during the colonial days.

"Instead, we find that there seems to be a lack of understanding and this aggravates the situation," Dr Mahathir said.

He was speaking in an interview with the *Financial Times* of London in conjunction with his six-day official visit to Britain beginning today. This is his first official visit to the UK.

The visit will cover a number of areas and there will be strong emphasis on economic matters.

Malaysia is also interested in Britain's perception of the international situation — politically and economically.

Dr Mahathir hoped that as a result of his visit relations between Britain and Malaysia would improve and become more mutually beneficial.

The interview touched on various other matters including politics, Malaysia's "Look East" and "Buy British Last" policies, industrialisation, the New Economic Policy and foreign investments.

He said the "Buy British Last" policy "ended a long time ago", adding that it was because British Prime

Minister Margaret Thatcher "appeared quite sincere in her desire to correct the problems which caused this thing in the first place".

There was no question of buying British last now. He said there were some people who did not believe it simply because they were not competitive enough.

He added however that not buying British last did not mean "we are going to buy British first. It simply means that you have to compete and if you lose in the competition then that's it".

He said he was worried about protectionism as the world was interdependent and no country could grow rich by itself "not even America." Interaction will bring richness to America.

"It is not true to say that America is helping other countries to be rich and those other countries are not helping America. I think Malaysia is helping America. We give them business, we pay money to them," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said he was satisfied with the performance of Malaysian industry.

He said a lot of people thought it was a mistake to go into industries but he stressed "it was not a mistake".

He explained what had happened was that as a result of the global recession people were not buying things. But, once people begin buying things again, the industries would be able to generate wealth for the country.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was looking particularly for foreign investments in export-oriented industries. He said the Japanese, South Koreans and Taiwanese cannot keep on manufacturing in their own countries.

"To remain competitive they have to move out. They are doing this and we mean to attract a lot of that sort of capital."

The Prime Minister was met on arrival at London's Heathrow airport by the British Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mr John Macgregor. An official welcoming ceremony was held at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London where he was met by Mrs Thatcher.

The two leaders later held discussions on matters of bilateral and international concern at No 10 Downing Street. An official dinner for Dr Mahathir and his delegation was held at Mrs Thatcher's official residence.

Tomorrow, he will hold discussions with the Secretary of Defence, Mr George Younger, the Secretary State for Trade and Industry, Lord Young of Graffham, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mr John Macgregor and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Sir Geoffrey Howe.

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