

PM pleased with reception
by British Govt and private sector

'THUMBS UP' TO U.K. TRIP

FROM REHMAN RASHID

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LONDON, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has expressed great satisfaction at the reception given to the Malaysian delegation by both the British Government and private sector.

"All our meetings have been well attended by the captains of industry here," the Prime Minister said, adding that he had received the impression of an overall desire for "a closer relationship with Malaysia" among the business and industrial community.

"They are now aware of our need for them to play a greater role in assisting the expansion of the Malaysian economy," he said.

Speaking at the end of a six-day visit to Britain aimed as much at revitalising linkages as in the pursuit of more British investment in Malaysia, the Prime Minister said his talks with senior British officials and businessmen had clarified the most useful areas of emphasis in bilateral relations.

"Generally, this has been a most useful visit for us," he concluded. "We hope that it achieves the results we were looking for in coming here."

Tourist market

After his visit to British Aerospace yesterday, Dr Mahathir expressed Malaysia's interest in purchasing BAE's new Advanced Turboprop (ATP) aircraft to replace the Malaysian Airline System's fleet of Fokker Friendships.

However, he emphasised that such a purchase would be tied to the question of the two extra weekly MAS landings Malaysia is asking Britain to allow.

On tourism, Dr Mahathir noted the increase in the number of visitors from Britain to Malaysia over the past two years, but added that there was still much scope for improvement.

"We can attract still more," he said. "But we need to spend more in promoting Malaysia."

He pointed out that the tourist market was now dominated by a younger generation with no direct memory or experience of Malaysia.

"To the British tourists of today," he said, "Malaysia is just the same as all other countries."

There was thus a heightened need not to rely on past familiarities as a means of maintaining awareness of Malaysia as tourist destination.

In addition to the visit to British Aerospace yesterday, during which Dr Mahathir and his entourage were treated to an aerial demonstration of the ATP aircraft being considered for purchase, the Prime Minister's delegation also visited two research establishments in Cambridgeshire.

At PA Technology in Melbourn, they were briefed on the latest biotechnological developments in palm oil research.

Tough talking

Genetic engineering techniques are being used there to increase the beta-carotene (vitamin E) content of palm oil, and also to develop stunted strains of oil palm for easier harvesting.

At the laboratories of Cambridge Instruments, Dr Mahathir was shown state-of-the-art apparatus in microscopy and optical analysis.

"This may be useful in Malaysian research," he said, "when we have more funds."

The Prime Minister is confident that this visit will help Malaysia generate those funds, through establishing the foundations for a more dynamic economic relationship with Britain.

He made no apologies for the tough talking he has had to do in pursuit of this end.

"We have to be frank if we want the British to understand us. And they seem to appreciate it. They agree that the time has come for Malaysia not to be taken for granted or ignored," he said.

The Prime Minister, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah and the rest of the Malaysian team had a chance to relax and sightsee today, enjoying excursions to the Tower of London and along the Thames by river-launch.

The delegation leaves London for Budapest tomorrow.