

~~Dr M~~ raps groups out to sour ties with Britain

oversea trips
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By K.H. LIM

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today hit out at "certain quarters" who are trying to sour Anglo-Malaysian ties by harping on the "Buy British Last" policy adopted by Malaysia a few years ago.

The Prime Minister said these groups kept bringing up this policy even though it was no longer practised.

"In my opinion, this matter was resolved a long time ago... even before (British Prime Minister) Margaret Thatcher visited Malaysia.

"There are some quarters who bring up this 'Buy British Last' policy on purpose because they want to see bad relations with Britain."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had stated clearly that this policy was no longer in practice.

"These quarters do not like to see good relations between the two countries."

Allegations

He was speaking to reporters on arrival from London after his official visit to Britain, Hungary and the Soviet Union.

He charged that these groups were attempting to plant doubts in the minds of British businessmen intending to invest in Malaysia.

"They make allegations that we will not keep our promises.

"They are still saying that we will nationalise (businesses) even though we have never nationalised anything.

"They also claim we will nationalise industries or change our relaxed investment conditions after five years.

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Objectives of trip have been achieved

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"We have said these relaxed conditions will be available to any investor within this five-year period."

Dr Mahathir said he did not know why these groups wanted to do so. He also declined to identify them.

Asked to name these "quarters", he said: "You can think about it yourself (as to) who they are."

On the outcome of his three-nation visit, Dr Mahathir said he felt the objectives had been met and his delegation had been accorded excellent receptions by the governments of the three countries, government companies in Hungary and the private sector in Britain.

He was confident that his discussions with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on Kampuchea would have an "effect" in helping to solve the issue.

He said he had a message for all heads of government in Asean on the Kampuchean issue and on arms control. He did not say what this message was.

He only said that it would either be conveyed through the Asean missions or at the Asean summit in December.

On the possibility of buying heavy weapons from the Soviet Union, he said there were no specific talks but army chief Jeneral Tan Sri Hashim Mohamed Ali, who was a member of the delegation, had discussed this with Soviet leaders.

On Soviet investments, the Prime Minister said it was not an "investing" country but there were possibilities for co-operation "if we can identify suitable industries".

Asked if Malaysia would have a more favourable corporate tax structure to attract investors, he said this possibility had been raised while the delegation was in Britain.

"We only mentioned the possibility... we also have to compete with neighbouring countries.

"It does not mean we will necessarily reduce corporate tax but we will study it."

On the dadah menace, he said leaders of all three countries had demonstrated their support for the fight against dadah at the recent Vienna Conference.

On Malaysia's tough anti-dadah laws, he said Britain had officially held back support for capital punishment for traffickers.

"But unofficially, in personal discussions, British leaders support our actions (in hanging traffickers)."