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MAHATHIR-FIJI

BM

KUALA LUMPUR, OCT 21 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY MALAYSIA WILL PROVIDE ANY FORM OF ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE TO FIJI IN EFFORTS TO HELP IT OVERCOME ITS PROBLEMS.

THE PRIME MINISTER, HOWEVER, SAID MALAYSIA HAD NOT MADE A STAND WHETHER TO RECOGNISE THE NEW REPUBLIC AS THE POLITICAL CONFLICT IN THE COUNTRY HAD NOT ENDED.

HE SAID FIJI WAS IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE AS THE COUNTRY WAS FACING NUMEROUS PROBLEMS AFTER CERTAIN NATIONS, NOT BEING FAR SIGHTED ENOUGH, SUDDENLY IMPOSED FOOD AND OTHER SANCTIONS ON THE REPUBLIC.

+IF FIJI DID NOT GET ASSISTANCE, THE SITUATION IN THAT COUNTRY WILL PROBABLY WORSEN,+ HE TOLD REPORTERS AT THE KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON HIS RETURN FROM VANCOUVER.

MALAYSIA, HE SAID, WOULD PROVIDE ANY FORM OF ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE TO FIJI BASED ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS AS IT WOULD ANY OTHER COUNTRY WHICH NEEDED HELP. -- MORE

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THE COMMONWEALTH EXPELLED FIJI FROM THE GROUPING WHEN THE SOUTH PACIFIC NATION WAS DECLARED A REPUBLIC BY MILITARY LEADER COLONEL SITIVEMI RABUKA AFTER THE SECOND MILITARY COUP.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID BEFORE ANY ACTION WAS TAKEN AGAINST FIJI, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SHOULD WAIT FOR THE OUTCOME OF THE CONFLICT IN THE COUNTRY.

HE EXPRESSED REGRET THAT CERTAIN PARTIES HAD COMPARED THE RABUKA GOVERNMENT WITH THAT OF THE APARTHEID REGIME IN SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE SUMMIT MEETING.

+I TRIED TO DEFEND FIJI'S POSITION IN THE COMMONWEALTH BECAUSE THE SITUATION IN THAT COUNTRY WAS NOT STATIC BUT IT SEEMED THAT CERTAIN PARTIES WANTED TO SEE FIJI OUT OF THE GROUPING,+ HE SAID.

HE FEARED THAT ONCE FIJI WAS PREPARED TO REJOIN THE COMMONWEALTH, THE COUNTRY WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTED BECAUSE ACCORDING TO THE PRACTICE OF THE COMMONWEALTH, A COUNTRY'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP COULD NOT BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF ALL MEMBERS.

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+WE WILL NOT SUPPORT A GOVERNMENT WHICH IS TRUELY INSTITUTIONALISED RACISM,+ HE SAID.

HOWEVER, THE POLITICAL CONFLICT IN FIJI HAS NOT ENDED AND THE COUNTRY WOULD PROBABLY MAKE SEVERAL CHANGES, NOT RACIST IN NATURE, HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE FELT THAT HIS PRESENCE AT THE MEETING WAS USEFUL AS HE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH LEADERS OF OTHER COUNTRIES OFFICIALLY AND UNOFFICIALLY.

HE ALSO FELT THAT THE SUMMIT HAD COME TO AN AGREEMENT IN MANY FIELDS.

HOWEVER, HE EXPRESSED REGRET OVER THE COVERAGE BY SOME NEWSPAPERS, ESPECIALLY FROM BRITAIN, WHICH HAD NOT MADE VERY ACCURATE REPORTS ON THE MEETING.

HE CITED THE SOUTH AFRICA ISSUE AS AN EXAMPLE WHEREBY IT WAS REPORTED THAT BRITAIN HAD OBTAINED A MAJOR VICTORY IN EFFORTS TO PROTEST AGAINST ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ON THE APARTHEID GOVERNMENT WHEN IN FACT 48 COUNTRIES HAD AGREED ON THE SANCTIONS AND ONLY BRITAIN WAS AGAINST SUCH A MOVE. -- BERNAMA

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