

R E134 AAE

MAHATHIR

(EMBARGO) FOR RELEASE AFTER 0001 HRS, OCT 4)

BY AHMAD REJAL ARBEE 88

8 1/2 hrs overseas

NEW YORK, OCT 3 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD MET EDITORS AND COLUMNISTS OF VARIOUS INFLUENTIAL NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES HERE TODAY, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS CURRENT VISIT TO ADDRESS THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY TOMORROW, TO TRY AND GET THE MEDIA TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION AND DEVELOPMENTS IN MALAYSIA.

THE JOURNALISTS AND COLUMNISTS ARE FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES, WASHINGTON POST, LOS ANGELES TIMES, TIME, NEWSWEEK AND FORBES MAGAZINES.

THIS WAS THE SECOND TIME HE HAD HAD SUCH DISCUSSIONS WITH MEDIA LEADERS. LAST FRIDAY HE HAD, AT THE REQUEST OF THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, MET A DELEGATION OF ITS SENIOR EXECUTIVES AND JOURNALISTS HEADED BY CHAIRMAN WARREN PHILIPS TO DISCUSS THE JOURNAL, IN PARTICULAR ITS ASIAN EDITION -- THE ASIAN WALL STREET JOURNAL'S COVERAGE OF MALAYSIA.

THEY ALSO DISCUSSED CURRENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA.

IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSED HIS SENTIMENT OVER THE WESTERN MEDIA'S PERCEPTION OF MALAYSIA AND ASKED FOR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MALAYSIA IS TRYING TO DO WITHIN THE COUNTRY'S PLURALISM CONTEXT, HAVING TO CONTEND WITH A MULTI-RACIAL, MULTI-RELIGIOUS AND MULTI-CULTURAL POPULATION. -- MORE
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THE TWO MEETINGS WERE ALSO IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S CRITICISMS OF THE WESTERN MEDIA FOR NOT BEING OBJECTIVE IN REPORTING AND SELDOM SAYING GOOD ABOUT HAPPENINGS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE WESTERN MEDIA HAD, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, BEEN HIGHLIGHTING THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT, BOTH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC, GIVING AND HIGHLIGHTING VIEWS OF THE DISSENTERS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE MAINSTREAM MAJORITY.

IT IS AS IF BEING OBJECTIVE IS TO GIVE SPACE TO DISSENTERS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME BEING CYNICAL OF ANYTHING GOOD THAT HAPPENS AND TO BE CYNICAL AT MAJORITY SUPPORT.

AS THE RESULT, SPACE IS SELDOM GIVEN TO THE MAINSTREAM DEVELOPMENT OR SUCCESSSES ACHIEVED WHILE THOSE OF DISSENTERS ARE GIVEN WITH TAINTS OF SYMPATHY.

DEVELOPMENTS IN MALAYSIA, AS FOR THE PAST YEARS AND ESPECIALLY SINCE THE PREMIERSHIP OF DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, HAD NOT BEEN SEEN FAVOURABLY WITH THE PRIME MINISTER PARTICULARLY NOT ENJOING A GOOD PRESS. -- MORE

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MALAYSIA HAS MORE OFTEN THAN NOT BEEN DEPICTED AS A COUNTRY WHERE ITS POPULATION DOES NOT ACTUALLY ENJOY DEMOCRACY BUT ARE ALWAYS FACING THE DANGER OF BEING DETAINED WITHOUT TRIAL UNDER THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT (ISA).

THE PRIME MINISTER, AS AT HIS LAST FRIDAY'S MEETING, WAS VERY CANDID WITH THE JOURNALISTS ABOUT THE REAL DANGER THAT MALAYSIA COULD FACE FROM ITS OWN EXTREMIST ELEMENTS AND DEMAGOGUE, WHETHER RACIAL OR RELIGIOUS.

AS SUCH, IT NEEDED TO HAVE VARIOUS PIECES OF LEGISLATION INCLUDING THE ISA SO AS TO SAFEGUARD THE COUNTRY AND THE MAINSTREAM POPULATION IN FACING UNSTABLE SITUATION AND DANGERS.

IT IS UNDERSTOOD THE PRIME MINISTER ASKED THE JOURNALISTS TO WRITE ON WHAT MALAYSIA IS TRYING TO DO AND ACHIEVE AND ALSO REPORT SOME POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE COUNTRY.

THERE HAD BEEN VARIOUS SUCCESS STORIES IN MALAYSIA LIKE PLANTATION MANAGEMENT WHICH EVEN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS HAD RECOGNISED BUT NOT MERIT A MENTION IN THE WESTERN MEDIA. -- MORE
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THE MEETING WITH JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA LEADERS ARE SEEN AS AN IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT IN EFFORTS TO MEND FENCES BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY DR MAHATHIR, AND THE MEDIA. IT IS ALSO SEEN AS AN EFFORT BY THE MEDIA TO REGISTER THEIR INTEREST IN HAVING AN ACCEPTABLE BASIS OF RELATIONS WITH MALAYSIA.

IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD THE MEDIA THAT MALAYSIA WELCOMED CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISMS AND WOULD NOT WELCOME CYNICISM AND PLAY ON RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS.

THE EDITORS AT THE MEETING SHOWED INTEREST IN GETTING THE PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON CURRENT DEVELOPMENT IN ASEM AND THE REGION AS WELL AS BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE US, BOTH POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR IS DUE TO ADDRESS THE 43RD SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY TOMORROW. THE LAST TIME HE ADDRESSED THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY WAS IN 1986.

HIS PRESENCE THIS YEAR IS SEEN AS VERY IMPORTANT TO SHOW MALAYSIA'S SUPPORT OF THE MULTI-NATION SYSTEM.

THE UN IS SEEN AS THE BEST GUARANTEE FOR MALAYSIA TO MAINTAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY AND INTEGRITY, COLLECTIVELY STRATEGIC SECURITY SYSTEM TO DEFEND AGAINST ANY OUTSIDE POWER AGGRESSION. --
BERNAMA

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