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MAHATHIR-TUNKU
BY SALMY HASHIM

① Trip overseas

WASHINGTON, OCT. 3 (BERNAMA) -- MALAYSIA'S FIRST PRIME MINISTER TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN WAS +BEING USED+ AS A PROTECTIVE SHIELD BY ONE OF THE SHUTTERED NEWSPAPERS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TOLD JOURNALISTS IN NEW YORK WHEN HE TALKED ABOUT THE SWEEPING OCTOBER ARRESTS IN MALAYSIA.

THE TUNKU, 83, AN OUTSPOKEN CRITIC OF DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, +HAS ALWAYS HARBOURED ILL-FEELINGS TOWARD ME,+ THE WASHINGTON POST REPORTED YESTERDAY QUOTING THE MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE DANGER OF RACIAL OR CIVIL CONFLICT +IS VERY MUCH LESS NOW+ THAN WHEN HE ORDERED A SUDDEN CRACKDOWN ONE YEAR AGO THIS MONTH, ARRESTING MORE THAN 100 POLITICAL LEADERS AND CLOSING THREE NEWSPAPERS -- THE STAR, NATAN AND SIN CHEE JIT POH.

BEFORE THE 1987 CRACKDOWN, +TENSION WAS VERY HIGH,+ THE PRIME MINISTER SAID.

TWENTY-ONE PERSONS ARE STILL IMPRISONED UNDER THE ISA BUT THE PUBLISHING PERMITS OF THE THREE NEWSPAPERS HAVE BEEN REINSTITATED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR CITED A SHARP INCREASE IN FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN MALAYSIA AS EVIDENCE THAT THE POLITICAL SITUATION THERE WAS NO LONGER IN A STATE OF UNCERTAINTY OR EMERGENCY.--MORE
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MAHATHIR-TUNKU 2 WASHINGTON

ON THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA, HE SAID THAT A UN PEACEKEEPING FORCE WOULD BE NEEDED THERE FOR SEVERAL YEARS TO PREVENT THE FEARED KHMER ROUGE GUERRILLAS FROM RETURNING TO POWER WHEN VIETNAMESE TROOPS WITHDRAW.

SUCH A FORCE MUST OVERSEE FREE ELECTIONS, THE TRANSFER OF ADMINISTRATIVE POWER TO A COALITION GOVERNMENT AND +GENERALLY GIVE BOTH MORAL AND PHYSICAL SUPPORT+ TO FORMER CAMBODIAN CHIEF OF STATE PRINCE NORODON SIHANOUK, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID.

+OTHERWISE, THE KHMER ROUGE WILL TAKE OVER+ WHEN VIETNAMESE OCCUPYING FORCES WITHDRAW AS THEY HAVE PROMISED TO DO BY 1990,+ HE SAID.

NON-COMMUNIST CAMBODIAN TROOPS UNDER SIHANOUK MIGHT BE EQUAL IN NUMBERS TO THE KHMER ROUGE IN ABOUT TWO YEARS, HE SAID, BUT AT ANOTHER POINT ADDED THAT IT MIGHT TAKE +FIVE YEARS OR SO+ TO STRENGTHEN SIHANOUK SUFFICIENTLY TO GAIN THE UPPER HAND IN CAMBODIA.
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SIHANOUK WAS CONFIDENT HE COULD HANDLE THE SITUATION ,+BUT WE HAVE OUR DOUBTS,+ THE PRIME MINISTER SAID.

HE ADDED,+THE UNITED NATIONS MUST ACCEPT A ROLE IN CAMBODIA IF WE ARE GOING TO HAVE A CAMBODIA THAT IS VIABLE. OTHERWISE WE ARE GOING TO THROW THE CAMBODIANS AT THE MERCY OF PEOPLE WHO ARE CAPABLE OF ALL KINDS OF ATROCIOUS THINGS.+

THE CHINA-BACKED KHMER ROUGE GUERRILLAS UNDER POL POT ARE BLAMED FOR THE DEATHS OF MORE THAN ONE MILLION CAMBODIANS IN THEIR 1975-78 RULE, WHICH WAS ENDED BY THE VIETNAMESE INVASION A DECADE AGO.

THE POST REPORTED THAT DATUK SEHI OR MAHATHIR DID NOT SAY HOW A UN FORCE WOULD BE AUTHORISED OR STRUCTURED, EXCEPT TO SAY THAT THERE MUST BE AN INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS.

SOME SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES ARE SUGGESTING AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CAMBODIA TO CREATE SUCH A PEACEKEEPING FORCE WHICH COULD BE COMPRISED OF EUROPEANS AND THIRD WORLD NATIONS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT. -- BERNAMA

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