

R 2744 AAE
MAHATHIR-VIETNAM
(EMBARGO) FOR RELEASE AT 9 PM TONIGHT)
BY A. KARIM SHUKOR

88 (2) Trip overseas.
SINGAPORE, DEC 13, (BERNAMA)-- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TONIGHT THAT ASEAN COULD ACCEPT VIETNAM AS A MEMBER OF THE GROUPING IN THE FUTURE SHOULD IT SUBSCRIBE TO THE IDEAS OF ASEAN. SPEAKING AT A TV PANEL DISCUSSION WHICH WAS SHOWN OVER THE SINGAPORE BROADCASTING CORPORATION (SBC) TONIGHT, HE SAID THAT ASEAN WAS NOT THINKING OF THE QUESTION OF A BALANCE OF POWER BUT GENERAL PEACE IN THE REGION.

ASEAN COMPRISES MALAYSIA, BRUNEI, INDONESIA, SINGAPORE, THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES.

+IF HE CAN HAVE COUNTRIES SUBSCRIBE TO IDEAS THAT HE SHOULD NOT RESOLVE ANY CONFLICT THROUGH WAR, THAT IS SUFFICIENT FOR US AND IT IS NOT NECESSARY FOR ONE BLOC TO HAVE COUNTER-BALANCE TO ANOTHER BLOC HAVING MILITARY STRENGTH WHATSOEVER,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT IDEOLOGY WAS NOT SOMETHING DECISIVE AS IT WAS BEFORE, ADDING THAT MALAYSIA NOW HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ALL COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, ADDING THAT +IF VIETNAM SUBSCRIBES TO THE IDEAS OF ASEAN THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT THAT IT PRACTICES SHOULD NOT BE SOMETHING THAT STAND IN THE WAY OF VIETNAM BECOMING AN ASEAN MEMBER.+

DR MAHATHIR SAID ASEAN'S APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM WOULD BE TO TRY TO CULTIVATE VIETNAM, KAMPUCHEA AND LAOS AND INTERACT WITH THEM TO SEE +HOW WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER+.-MORE
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THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WOULD IMAGINE THAT EVENTUALLY VIETNAM WAS GOING TO COPY ASEAN'S MARKET ECONOMY SYSTEM.

HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT ASEAN DID NOT WISH TO EXPORT ITS OWN BELIEFS TO OTHER NATIONS.

+IF THEY WANT TO LEARN FROM THE ATTITUDE OF ASEAN THEY ARE WELCOME BUT WE ARE NOT GOING TO PREACH,+ HE SAID.

ANSWERING A QUESTION, HE SAID BURMA WAS ALSO WELCOME TO JOIN THE GROUPING BUT IT WOULD TAKE TIME AS IT HAS TO SETTLE ITS INTERNAL PROBLEMS FIRST.

IF BURMA CAN SUBSCRIBE TO THE IDEAS OF ASEAN, IT COULD JOIN THE GROUPING, HE ADDED.

EARLIER, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MET HIS SINGAPORE COUNTERPART LEE KUAN YEN FOR DISCUSSIONS WHICH ALSO TOUCHED ON THE QUESTION OF ADDITIONAL FLIGHT FREQUENCIES FOR MALAYSIA AIRLINES BETWEEN KUALA LUMPUR AND KUCHING VIA SINGAPORE.--BERNAMA
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