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R E524 AAE
MAHATHIR-MANDELA
FROM AZMAN UJANG⁹⁰

2 Mp overseas.

LUSAKA, FEB 28 (BERNAMA) -- MALAYSIA WILL OFFER ALL POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE TO THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (ANC) IN ITS STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM OF THE BLACK MAJORITY IN SOUTH AFRICA, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

HE CONVEYED THIS ASSURANCE TO ANC LEADER NELSON MANDELA DURING THEIR FOUR-EYE MEETING AT STATE HOUSE, THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCE OF THE ZAMBIAN PRESIDENT HERE.

THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD MALAYSIAN JOURNALISTS AFTER THE MEETING THAT HE HAD ALSO INVITED MANDELA TO VISIT MALAYSIA.

HE SAID MANDELA HAD ACCEPTED THE INVITATION BUT IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT HE COULD VISIT MALAYSIA AT THE MOMENT AS HE HAD TO FULFIL SIMILAR INVITATIONS FROM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND ALSO BECAUSE OF HIS OWN PRESSING COMMITMENTS TO THE ANC.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE INVITATION OF ZAMBIAN PRESIDENT KENNETH KAUNDA FOR HIM TO MEET MANDELA WAS A HIGH HONOUR FOR MALAYSIA AND A RECOGNITION OF THE COUNTRY'S STRONG STAND AGAINST APARTHEID AND FOR SANCTION AGAINST THE PRETORIA REGIME TO BRING AN END TO THE RACIST SYSTEM. -- MORE

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MAHATHIR-MANDELA 2 LUSAKA

+WE HAVE BEEN VERY CONSISTENT IN OUR STAND AGAINST APARTHEID WAY BACK SINCE THE ADMINISTRATION OF TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO EARLIER CHAIRED A MEETING BETWEEN THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP AND MANDELA AND HIS TOP ANC OFFICIALS, SAID THE MEETING UNANIMOUSLY AGREED NOT ONLY TO CONTINUE WITH EXISTING SANCTIONS BUT ALSO TO STEP UP SUCH MEASURES UNTIL SUCH TIME THAT DEFINITE STEPS WERE TAKEN TO END APARTHEID.

THE TWO-HOUR MEETING, ATTENDED BY LEADERS OF ALL THE FRONTLINE STATES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, HAD ENABLED THE HEADS OF TO HEAR FROM MANDELA HIMSELF WHAT FURTHER STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN TOWARDS FURTHER PROGRESS IN THE ANC'S STRUGGLE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE SANCTIONS WOULD BE REVIEWED ONLY AFTER THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAD REPORTED ON WHETHER OR NOT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAD IMPLEMENTED FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THE COUNTRY. THE ASSEMBLY IS EXPECTED TO COME OUT WITH THE ASSESSMENT ON THE SITUATION ON SOUTH AFRICA ON JULY 30.

HE SAID, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT MANDELA ASKED FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO HELP MEET THE COST OF ANC OPERATIONS AND THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENT PRESENT PLEDGED THAT THIS REQUEST WOULD BE LOOKED INTO.

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MANDELA ALSO TOLD THE MEETING THAT DISUNITY AMONG ETHNIC SOUTH AFRICAN FACTIONS FIGHTING THE REGIME WAS A BIG PROBLEM ALTHOUGH THE ANC WAS THE BIGGEST AND MOST ACTIVE OF THE LOT.

ANOTHER PROBLEM WAS THAT MANY MEMBERS OF THE ANC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WERE STILL IN EXILE AND THEY COULD NOT RETURN TO SOUTH AFRICA UNLESS THERE WAS ASSURANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE ARRESTED ON THEIR RETURN.

+MY OWN PARTICIPATION AT THE MEETING WITH MANDELA IS AN HONOURED RECOGNITION OF MALAYSIA'S ACTIVE ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE ANC AND OPPOSING APARTHEID,+ HE ADDED.

EARLIER, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR PRESENTED MANDELA WITH A SILVER KRIS WHICH HE SAID +WAS USED IN THE OLD DAYS TO STAB PEOPLE BUT NOW IS MAINLY USED AS A DECORATIVE ITEM.+

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO PRESENTED A LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE ANC CAUSE FROM AN +ORDINARY MALAYSIAN+. -- MORE

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TO THIS, MANDELA SAID: +COMING FROM AN ORDINARY MALAYSIAN MAKES IT EVEN MORE MEANINGFUL.+

THE ANC LEADER DESCRIBED THE KRIS AS A SYMBOL OF FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE FROM THE MALAYSIAN PEOPLE TO THE STRUGGLE OF THE BLACKS IN HIS COUNTRY WHICH HE ALWAYS VALUED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS.

DR MAHATHIR ALSO POSED FOR PHOTOGRAPHS WITH THE MANDELA FAMILY WHICH INCLUDED HIS WIFE WINNIE, DAUGHTERS ZENI AND ZENANI AND A GRANDCHILD.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR LATER RETURNED TO KUALA LUMPUR ON A MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE JET VIA THE SEYCHELLES.

HE IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE HOME TOMORROW MORNING. -- BERNAMA
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