

CNS8388

R GE 13-04 00141 EA869

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Mahathir-batteries

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(P)

JITRA, April 13, (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he has come to understand that Australia will restrict the import of batteries from Malaysia on the excuse that they are produced with government subsidy.

He said he was not clear as to what Australia meant by this.

However, he added, Malaysia would not retaliate by restricting imports from Australia.

+We will not impose restrictions on anything ... we believe in free trade,+ he told reporters after he was briefed on development in the Kuban Pasu District at the district office here.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia imported many goods from Australia, such as meat, milk, sugar and flour but Malaysia's products did not have a good market there. -- more

♥13/04/13-55MST

CNS8413

R GE 13-04 00170 EA872

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Mahathir-batteries 2 Jitra

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said this when asked to comment on the strained relationship between Malaysia and Australia.

Asked whether Malaysia would resort to boycotting Australian goods under a policy similar to the +Buy British last+ policy used against Britain at one time, the prime minister said: +We have not reached that stage yet.+

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the relationship between Malaysia and Australia at this stage could be considered as +proper+ or +in accordance with procedure and not more than that ... not that between close friends.+

Asked whether the strain in the relationship occurred under the present prime minister (Bob Hawke), Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: +I do not want to blame any government or prime minister.+

He added that when Malaysia acted against dadah traffickers, it was accused of being barbaric and uncivilised. Similarly, when it acted to safeguard security in 1987, it was accused of being undemocratic. -- more

♥13/04/14-33MST

CNS8429

R GE 13-04 00243 EA873

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+All these accusations came from Australia. Other countries did not make such accusations. But Australia, it seems, feels that it is the judge in this region. And it must determine the standard that must be adhered to by all people,+ he said.

Asked his opinion of why Australia seemed to be unhappy with Malaysia, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: +I believe that this is a feeling that they are superior to us. They consider themselves a civilised people while we are developing ... lagging behind.+

He also said that there was the feeling that because this country has Muslims it is looked upon as an enemy. The country was portrayed as an Islamic country that was backward and unimportant.

Asked about the support of Australia and New Zealand for the proposed East Asia Economic Grouping (EAEG), he said the grouping did not need their backing.

Asked whether New Zealand wanted to join the grouping, he said New Zealand did not come under the classification of an East Asian country but if other East Asian countries wanted to accept New Zealand as a member the grouping was willing to do so.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir and his wife, Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, arrived here yesterday evening to break fast with the people in Tunjang. They returned to Kuala Lumpur today. -- Bernama

13/01/14-52MST