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Mahathir-Australia (requested rptn)

From Abdul Rahman Sulaiman

NADI (Fiji), July 5 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has no respect for any country or people who tell lies or say nasty things about other countries for their own benefit, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Friday.

He told a press conference that Malaysia could not be expected to sit still and smile in the event that the country was made the target for such an action.

+They must not be angry when we protest in our own way,+ he said in response to a question posed by an Australian journalist pertaining to the current relations between Malaysia and Australia.

The Prime Minister said: +As much as they can say nasty things about us and expect us to smile, they should be willing to have nasty things said about them or nasty actions taken against them.+

Relations between Malaysia and Australia had of late been cool as a result of what the western press described as Malaysia's displeasure over a series of television programmes aired by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) which offended Malaysia.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said although it was easy to say that the Australian government had nothing to do with the programmes as it respected the freedom of the press and therefore was in no position to influence the ABC, the government did in fact take the station to task when it gave a pro-Saddam Hussein coverage during the recent Gulf War. -- more ITEM STORED AS: ER006 ESB 00261 GE 05-07 1442 Mahathir Australia From Abdul Ra

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In any event, he said, the Australian government did describe the Malaysians as barbaric once.

On Malaysia's petroleum crude which Fiji is buying at a rate of 10,000 barrels per day, the Prime Minister said he was willing to consider supplying more but this depended on Malaysia's production capacity.

At the moment, Malaysia was not in a position to increase its production which amounted to 650,000 barrels a day as it had to follow strictly its conservation policy.

He said that of the total daily production only a small amount was allotted for the export market.

He denied a suggestion, said to be mooted by international oil companies here which were unhappy over Fiji's purchase of the Malaysian crude, that it was of inferior quality.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Malaysian crude was in fact of superior quality as it was low in sulphur content and other impurities.

+We always sell at a higher price. Even during the glut, we have no problems in selling,+ he said.

Earlier, the Prime Minister who is here on a 24-hour visit on the way home from a three-week tour of the Latin American countries, met the Fijian Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, at his hotel here. -- more

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The Fijian Premier and several members of his cabinet specially flew here from Suva to meet Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir.

The Prime Minister said he briefed the Fijian Prime Minister on the outcome of his visit, especially on his proposal to open up the southern route involving air and sea links between Southeast Asia and South America.

He said Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara was positive about the proposal which, among other things, intended to use Fiji as one of the stop-points.

He said Fiji would also benefit from this arrangement, now still at the negotiation stage, as it could buy foodstuff such as fruits from Latin America or sell its goods to those countries.

On the South-South cooperation, the Prime Minister said he had no other motives in promoting the idea except to formulate a common voice at multi-lateral trade negotiations in order to be heard by the developed world.

He said it was also Malaysia's policy to help the poorer developing countries as poor countries caused problems to their neighbours.

He cited as an example, the problem of the Vietnamese refugees which caused problems to neighbouring countries like Malaysia as they fled their country for a better life elsewhere.

The Prime Minister said even in western Europe, people were now worried over the possible influx of the 30 million Russians in the event that poverty in their country became worse. -- more

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+Under such circumstances, it is also in our interest to help poorer countries become rich,+ he said.

The Prime Minister and his entourage arrived here early today after a 15-hour flight from Mendoza after a four-day visit to Argentina.

He made a three-hour stop at the Easter Island after which he was given an emotional send-off by the family of the 36-year-old Chilean fisherman who successfully underwent surgery on board the Malaysia Airlines flight from the island to Santiago on June 18.

They thanked the Prime Minister who allowed the use of the aircraft to transport the patient, Frasisco Haoa, and the Malaysian cardiologist, Dr Zainal Hamid, who operated on him.

They also presented gifts to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir and Dr Zainal.

The Prime Minister and his party are scheduled to depart here at midnight and are expected to arrive in Kuala Lumpur at 6.30am Saturday. -- Bernama

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