

CNS9860

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MAHATHIR LASHES OUT AT BBC

Mahathir-BBC

From Kuala Lumpur

HARARE, Oct 16<sup>15</sup> (Bernama) - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed today lashed out at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for suggesting that Commonwealth countries which do not live up to BBC's definition of democracy, opt out of the organisation. *overseas trips.*

+It is quite a proposal, he said, in that it would mean that the Commonwealth of today would not exist and that the organisation should revert to the kind of Commonwealth in which there were five members -- Britain, Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand:

+I felt that it is a little bit racist on the part of the BBC, but then one is not surprised when the BBC suggests this kind of Commonwealth, + he told newsmen after attending a breakfast meeting of the Commonwealth Sports Federation.

The meeting was also attended by the heads of government of Australia and other countries interested in hosting the 1998 Commonwealth Games. -- more

♥16/10/18-56MST

CNS9862

R GE 16-10 00151 EA762

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Mahathir-BBC '2 Harare

The Prime Minister was interviewed by phone by the BBC Tuesday night and among other things, he said, the BBC charged that Malaysia was not democratic.

He said the BBC seemed to think that it had the right to draw up conditions and rules (on democracy and good government) and if a member-country did not adhere to their conditions, then it should stay out of the Commonwealth.

To the BBC, it seemed that the majority of the Commonwealth members did not really practice democracy or had good governments, singling out Malaysia as one of them, he added.

+We have to do a re-thinking (about Malaysia's place) if the Commonwealth is exclusively for people who claim that they are the sole practitioners of democracy and good government, besides subscribing to human rights, he said. -- more

♥16/10/18-58MST

CNS387 1

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Mahathir-BBC 3 Harare

+Of course, if the Commonwealth reverts to the old dominion. .. if it is the BBC's wish, then how can we object ,+ he said..

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir- said he did not think the BBC's views were that of the British government .

+But, while we appreciate that it is not the British government's views, we must also understand that the BBC has a world audience, and when the BBC said that (about Malaysia) , it is bound to influence the people's mind against countries like Malaysia ,+ he added.

He recalled the time when some American writers described Malaysia as .. +a corrupt and totalitarian country+, it had cause a lot of American investors to shy away from Malaysia.

He said Malaysia agreed to accept the British draft in the High Level Appraisal Group meeting Tuesday after they accepted the British explanation of what they meant by good government and human rights.

+The explanation was acceptable to us because they, cited Haiti, for example, as the kind of government they do not consider to be good government ,+he added, noting that they did not include Malaysia in that list. -- more

♥16/10/19-03MST

CNS9888

R GE 16-10 00182 EA767

aae tbe

Mahathir-BBC 4 Harare

In fact , he believed that the 10 heads of government in the group had no differences in perception on what was meant by good government, human rights and democracy. -

But, the BBC singled out Malaysia as one of those countries that did not qualify (in its definition) and that Malaysia detained people without trial and so on, he said.

He added : +Although I did point out that it is a British law which we adopted , they seemed to think that it was okay when the British were there and it is not okay when the British were not there.

+I can't understand this double standard, But then, we have to accept the fact that this is the freedom of the press which, to the BBC, seems to mean freedom to twist the news in a way that would blacken other people's names . t

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it would be a futile effort for him to have the draft of the group reworded. --more

♥16/10/19-26MST

CNS9892

R GE 16-10 00173 EA768

aae tbe

Mahathir-BBC 5 Harare

+We understand what is meant by good government. But I am afraid we are not going to be let off... there are going to be a lot of campaigns by interested parties to make sure that the Commonwealth would take up something like this, +he added.

He said Malaysia remained in the Commonwealth because it subscribed to the fundamentals of the organisation.

+But, we also believe that we are an independent and sovereign nation, and as an independent country, we have the right to govern the way the people want us to govern, +he added.

Otherwise, the government would not be elected in a free election, he said.

The Prime Minister described his interview with the BBC as a one-sided one where he was asked +skewed+ questions and where it seemed that the BBC only had the objective of pointing out that Malaysia was not a democratic country and should +clean up its act + . -- more

♥16/10/19-31MST

CNS9893

R GE 16-10 00130 EA769

aae tbe

Mahathir-BBC 6 (last) Harare

He said he had first to listen to the question by phone and then face the camera to answer. The interviewer, he said, did not know what his answer was and he had to repeat it through the phone again.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also said that the definition of democracy changed with time and it was important that they had to be specific about it..

For example, Britain of 50 or 100 years ago, would not qualify as a democracy of today's definition.

+It is important that we define the basic rules of democracy, and if anybody conforms to these rules, then it should be considered as democratic, +he added.-- Bernama

♥16/10/19-32MST