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Mahathir-speech

BANGLADESH GOVT PRINTS 5, 000 COPIES OF MAHATHIR'S "DEMOCRACY" SPEECH
from Azman Ujang

DHAKA, Feb 17 (Bernama) -- The Bangladesh government was so impressed with a speech on democracy which Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad made during his just-concluded visit here that; it is printing 5,000 copies of the text for distribution.

Commerce Minister M.K. Anwar said here Tuesday he had asked the Foreign Ministry for a copy of the text of what he described as a "great speech".

"We will print 5,000 copies of the speech for distribution to government officials and officials of the (ruling) Bangladesh Nationalist Party," he told Bernama in an interview at his office here.

In the speech, which Dr Mahathir delivered on Saturday, the Prime Minister had among other things said that democracy was meaningless if it failed to enhance the well-being of the people and if turmoil and disorder became a way of life.

"Legitimacy in government attained through the democratic process should lead to the promotion, rather than the regular disruption of, the legitimate social, political and economic activities," Dr Mahathir had said. -- more

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The speech, made at a colourful ceremony where Dr Mahathir was presented with a symbolic key to the city of Dhaka, was highly praised by Bangladeshi government officials, the press and diplomats.

According to some local journalists, the theme of Dr Mahathir's speech reflected his deep concern for developing countries; which could not develop the economy for the well-being of their people due to political instability and social unrest, a situation which they said the Bangladesh government was trying to overcome.

The Bangladesh Commerce Minister said: "Bangladesh regards Dr Mahathir not only as a great leader of the Muslim countries but also of developing countries of the South. In that speech, he had said what we in Bangladesh wanted to say but could not say in the way he had said it."

Anwar said Dr Mahathir's strong stand in the interest of the developing countries at international forums was what made him a great leader of the South.

A former top Bangladesh civil servant, before being appointed to the Cabinet two years ago, Anwar recalled that at the summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Kuwait a few years ago, Dr Mahathir was the only head of government who brushed aside protocol. -- more

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"Although the heads of government at that summit had special suites for their exclusive use, Dr Mahathir was the only leader who came to the cafeteria to chat with senior officials of delegations, including myself. We really appreciated his gesture," added Anwar.

Bangladesh, he said, fully endorsed Dr Mahathir's view that no developing country could be expected to practise the 'so-called "perfect democracy" as understood in the West, adding that the Westminster-type of democracy could only be implemented if countries attained Westminster status.

Anwar, who held discussions with Malaysian International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz here over the weekend, said he agreed to a suggestion by Rafidah that a Bangladesh Week be held in Kuala Lumpur sometime this year to promote Bangladeshi products in the Malaysian market.

"Besides holding exhibitions of our goods, there will also be cultural events and tourism promotion to acquaint the Malaysian people to Bangladesh. This is the first time we are doing this in Malaysia," he added.

"Dr Mahathir's personal presence in Bangladesh has aroused new interest and a new dimension in relations between our two countries," he said of the Prime Minister's three-day visit. -- more

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He assured Malaysian businessmen that the investment climate in Bangladesh now was better than at any time before, following significant policy changes and deregulation to attract foreign investment by the present democratically-elected government.

He said that as Malaysia was going for high-tech industries, low or middle-tech industries would no longer be ideal for the country which had attained full employment and had to depend on several countries, including Bangladesh, for labour.

"Your businessmen should think of Bangladesh as possible location for low or middle-tech industries," he said. -- Bernama