

Mahathir regrets Chia's American nightmare

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KOTA BARU: The Prime Minister expressed regret yesterday that Tan Sri Eric Chia was recently subjected to harsh treatment by US authorities.

Bernama quoted Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as saying he could not visualise how a 60-year-old man could have harassed someone who was younger to the extent of the police being summoned.

"Even if he had done so, is the move to handcuff him, strip him and chain him fair?" Dr Mahathir asked.

In Malaysia the Government did not do such things "for if we do such things we'll be branded as barbarians and what are we to say to people who commit such acts?" he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was saddened that this was the second such incident to befall Malaysian citizens.

Recently, a group of tourists was also subjected to similar treatment by the US immigration authorities, he said.

Wong Chun Wai reports that Malaysia has officially lodged its unhappiness with the United States over Chia's arrest and ill-treatment in New York on March 2.

Foreign Ministry acting secretary-general Datuk Halim Ali conveyed the country's regret to US Ambassador John Stern Wolf, who was summoned to Wisma Putra yesterday.

"I stressed the point that such incidents should never happen again, and that Malaysians visiting the United States should not be treated improperly," Halim told newsmen after their 20-minute meeting.

On whether the United States had extended any apology, Halim said the United States had expressed regret over the

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Chia accorded all rights, says Wolf

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was arrested and handcuffed while on transit on March 2.

He said he narrated the reports by Chia and that Wolf, in turn, gave his version of the incident.

However, he said Malaysia did not doubt Chia's story.

On Wednesday, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Wolf would be summoned to explain Chia's arrest, saying Malaysia was unhappy with the ill-treatment of the Perwaja Steel managing director.

Chia suffered a 24-hour ordeal at the hands of New York police after he

When approached by newsmen after his meeting, Wolf read from a prepared statement, saying that he met Halim at the latter's request.

The information available to the embassy, he said, indicated that Chia was accorded all the procedural safeguards guaranteed by the US Constitution.

Asked to comment on the mood of the discussion, Wolf said the two governments had always been able to have friendly dialogues.