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IMPROVED ECONOMIC STATUS NOT REASON TO PAY UN MORE, SAYS MAHATHIR

By Salmi Hashim

NEW YORK, Sept 29 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's improved economic status should not be a reason for the country to pay more in annual dues to the United Nations, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here Tuesday.

"Why should we pay more? We're always prompt in our payment," he told reporters before dinner hosted by Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Tan Sri Razali Ismail.

According to Malaysian officials at the UN, Malaysia is currently paying about US\$1 million a year in annual dues or 0.12 per cent of the US\$1.12 billion annual UN budget.

Every three years, the General Assembly, based on recommendations by the Committee on Contribution, adopts a new rate of assessment for all members based on the country's "ability to pay."

The United States is paying the "ceiling" rate of 25 per cent, while the poorest LDCs merely 0.01 per cent of the annual budget.

"Since the rate was approved in 1992, Malaysia will keep on paying the 0.12 per cent rate until 1994," the official told Bernama.

The Prime Minister and his wife, Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, arrived Tuesday afternoon. He is scheduled to launch a roadshow to promote a better understanding of the Kuala Lumpur Stock Market here Wednesday. He will address the 48th UN General Assembly on Friday. -- more

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US President Bill Clinton told the General Assembly on Monday that the US would pay its long overdue US\$400 million bill for peacekeeping operations and another US\$400 million in unpaid dues. The US Congress is about to approve the money.

There are currently 17 UN peacekeeping missions around the world and Malaysia has sent some 3,400 men to seven of the trouble spots.

Malaysia has a peacekeeping presence of about 1,200 in Cambodia and about 900 in Africa with the bulk of 850 in Somalia. The biggest Malaysian contingent of 1,500 will be deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. -- Bernama

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