

# Protest note handed to Australian envoy

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Several quarters today expressed disappointment over Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating's remarks regarding Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Leading the critics is Umno Youth whose deputy head, Datuk Nazri Abdul Aziz, described the remarks as uncalled-for and demanded that Keating apologise not only to Dr Mahathir but the country as well.

Nazri said a protest note had also been sent to the Australian Government through Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia John Dauth.

The protest note was delivered by hand to the Australian High Commission this afternoon, Nazri told a Press conference here.

He said Umno Youth would also urge the Foreign Ministry to send a diplomatic protest to Canberra.

Keating, speaking to newsmen covering the Apec summit in Seattle in America had tagged Dr Mahathir "a recalcitrant".

Nazri said Umno Youth had given one week to Keating to respond, failing which it would call on the Malaysian Government to pursue other avenues including downgrading Malaysia-Australia relations and adopting a "buy Australia last" policy.

He said Umno Youth would also urge Government departments to review the existing co-operation with Australian companies and if possible cancel any yet-to-be-signed contracts. The MCA also criticised Keating for the remarks.

Its information bureau, in a statement, said Keating's attempt to belittle Malaysia's role in international organisations would not bring any benefit to Australia. Rather it would tarnish Australia's image.

The deputy president of the Malaysian Youth Council, Encik Abdul Rahman Palil, said Keating's attitude was a disgrace.

Meanwhile, Bernama reports that the Australian business community has reacted with hostility to the remarks by Keating.

Keating's remarks were considered undiplomatic and reflected his ignorance of Asian values and attitudes, president of the Melbourne-based Australia-Malaysia Business Council V.T. Lingam said.

In a telephone interview, Lingam said local newspapers and radio stations also criticised Keating for his "stupid" statement.