

U GE 03-12 00211 ED004

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Mahathir - letter

NOT NECESSARY FOR KEATING TO WRITE LETTER TO ME - MAHATHIR

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LANGKAWI, Dec 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that he does not see the need for Australia's Prime Minister Paul Keating to send a letter to him, which did not help to ease the strained relationship between Australia and Malaysia.

"I don't understand the need for Keating to send the letter, which to me, not in the least is an apology, which I did not ask..but the letter does not even appear conciliatory," he told reporters here.

"Hence, I don't know, what does it mean," he said when asked to comment on Keating's letter to him.

Dr Mahathir said he would not reply to the letter.

"I don't know how to reply, if I were to reply it may prolong," he said.

On the contents of the letter, he said, "If I were to say it is conciliatory also..the wording in the letter does sound conciliatory."

"It only explains why he (Keating) made such a statement in Seattle, that's all and why he felt unhappy with me." -- more

KHY TS AAM

▼03/12/23-20MST

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Mahathir - letter 2 Langkawi

Dr Mahathir said he had tried to avoid responding to questions posed to him earlier on the issue but it appeared that by not replying to the questions it was interpreted that he agreed to the stand taken by several ministers who criticised Australia.

He was saddened that Keating had said that Australia's Foreign Ministry was awaiting to receive protests, if any, from Malaysia.

"As far as I know, Wisma Putra made a protest but he in fact in his statement denied of any protest from our side. This should not have happened as it is not true," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he did not blame the Australians but he did not understand why Australia's Prime Minister was angry with him over his statement on Apec becoming too big.

"What I meant was Apec becoming too big not from the membership aspect but from the aspect of consolidation with the setting up of a formal secretariat and developing into a trading bloc," he said. -- more

KHY TS AAM

▼03/12/23-36MST

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Mahathir - letter 3 Langkawi

Dr Mahathir said, "My criticism was not over too many countries joining Apec, rather I agree that more should join Apec, the more the merrier as it is an organisation for Pacific nations and so all Pacific countries should become members. That is my stand but it need not become a trading bloc."

"Making Apec a trading bloc with members such as the United States, Japan and so on, then it becomes a massive organisation because it has too strong a crowd. This is what I disagree."

"But apparently Australia is angered why we supported Chile's membership of Apec, it seems because of our support for Chile becoming a member, Apec is said to have become massive. Not so, Chile is only a small country."

Dr Mahathir said if anyone had cause to be angry over his statement he felt it should be the United States and President Bill Clinton as he had directly criticised the United States' efforts to use Apec as a tool.

"I criticised and also I did not attend (the summit) although I was invited by President Clinton. If anyone should be angry with me it should be President Clinton, but it looks that President Clinton is not that angry although he may have felt unhappy but he did not make any offensive statement against the people of Malaysia or against me," he said. -- more
KHY TO AAM

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Mahathir - letter 4 Langkawi

Dr Mahathir said President Clinton, Japan and other Apec member countries were not angry with his statement but Australia alone had taken offence over his comments on Apec becoming too big.

"To the extent of passing remarks which were not meant to be offensive, but they cannot but be interpreted as being offensive. Intention alone will not suffice. If our intention is good but we utter bad words, people will only remember our words and not our intentions," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said he would explain if asked to do so by the press and ministers in Malaysia were entitled to their comments and interpretations.

"I cannot stop my ministers from making comments. They are entitled to make comments or resort to any action. It is up to them," he said.

As to whether he agreed that government agencies take action against Australia, Dr Mahathir said he did not issue any directive in general to anyone but if anyone had taken such action, it is because they were annoyed.

"Probably to them it is proof of their support for me or it maybe that they are angry. Anyway, it is their right.," he said.-- more

KHY TS AAM

04/12/00-18MST

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aae tbe

Mahathir - letter 5 (last) Langkawi

The Prime Minister however said if anyone accused him of agreeing to their actions just because he remained silent, it was a bad assumption which should not have been made.

On what action Australia should take to normalise relations with Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said, "to ease the situation, it's better not to reply, don't talk, don't do anything as it will only worsen the situation."

-- Bernama

KHY TS AAM

04/12/00-18MST