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Mahathir - Britain ''

MALAYSIA DISAPPOINTED OVER BRITISH GOVT'S SILENCE, MAHATHIR

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KUALA LUMPUR, March 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight the Malaysian Government is disappointed over the British Government's silence on the lies spread by the irresponsible British mass media.

He said the British Government also did not act well to deny or give a true explanation on the claims by the irresponsible media in that country that the leaders of the Malaysian Government were corrupt.

British newspapers recently attacked Dr Mahathir and other Malaysian leaders of having received pay-offs for approving privatised projects to British companies.

Dr Mahathir, however, said that the Malaysian Government had no quarrel with the British Government and British companies when it decided not to offer any new contracts to British companies.

"We have no quarrel with the British Government and also have no quarrel with any company...we are only angry with the British press and we have no way of taking action against the British press," he said when breaking the fast with Umno Youth leaders here tonight. -- more

HS TS AAM

▼01/03/22-38MST

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Mahathir - Britain 2 Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir said the government was constantly monitoring every development and foreign newspaper reports on Malaysia to know what they were saying about this country.

He said newspapers in any part of the world had the freedom to report the truth but it did not mean that they had the right to tell lies and make sweeping reports on any particular matter particularly against developing countries.

"Free to tell lies is not a right of the press, free to report the truth...yes," he said, adding that, "We also have no quarrel with John Major but with press freedom in that country."

On claims that the British Government gave aid for the RM1 billion Perqau hydro-electric dam project in Kelantan, Dr Mahathir explained that the amount was actually not an aid but a loan given at the minimum interest rate of 0.08 per cent.

He said the loan was not received by the Malaysian Government but was paid to the company involved in the project. -- more

HS TS AAM

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CNS0820

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Mahathir - Britain 3 Kuala Lumpur

"The money did not go into the pocket of the Prime Minister or any other Minister, we only borrowed to pay the company, Balfour Beatty," Dr Mahathir said.

He also said that the British Government's aid was actually aimed at helping British companies secure contracts and not to help the Malaysian Government.

He said most British companies gave higher quotations than other foreign companies and to help British companies, the British Government gave aid to them.

On the claim that a British construction company, Wimpey Group paid US\$50,000 to Dr Mahathir to get a contract for an aluminium smelter, the Prime Minister said Malaysia had no proposal to set up such a project.

"We have no project for such a plant, the government also does not have and the private sector also does not have," he said. -- more

HS TS AAM

▼01/03/23-26MST

CNS0822

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Mahathir - Britain 4 (last) Kuala Lumpur

He said it would have been stupid for Wimpey to have paid money for a non-existent project.

As of now, the Malaysian Government had only stopped giving government contracts and did not propose to take other action.

He said Malaysian students would continue to be sent to that country for studies, adding that "next time if rudeness prevails, then other action will be contemplated."

Earlier, Umno Youth head Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik said his movement fully supported the government's action and urged the government to be firm with its decision.

He said the government should also adequately brief Asean countries on the matter to ensure that they did not have a bad impression of this country. -- Bernama

HS TS AAM