

11/03/14-25MST

CNS6220

R GE 11-03 00224 EG219

aae the

Rptng, correcting abbreviation in para four:

Mahathir-Britain

MALAYSIA SYMPATHISES WITH WORKERS IN BRITAIN BUT...

bm

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia sympathised with the workers in Britain who faced losing their jobs in the wake of Kuala Lumpur's decision not to entertain British companies in awarding government contracts.

Nevertheless, the government could do nothing to withdraw the decision because when contracts were given to British companies, the government was assailed by baseless allegations by the British mass media and even some political leaders of that country.

"As such, if we do not give contracts to British companies there will be no accusations. Should we give profits to the British companies so that they (the media and some political leaders) can hurl accusations at us?" he told reporters at Angkasapuri after recording his Hari Raya message.

Trades Union Congress (TUC) general secretary John Monks was reported to have written to British Trade Minister Richard Needham to express the concern of trade unions about the damaging consequences for jobs in British industry if the current restriction on the involvement of British companies in government projects imposed by the Malaysian government was not lifted.

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AH IDB

end of rptn

11/03/14-33MST

R GE 11-03 00198 EA246

aae the

Mahathir-Britain 2 Kuala Lumpur

News reports today said TUC also wrote to the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) to seek its help in appealing to the government to withdraw the decision.

About three weeks ago, the Cabinet took a firm decision to stop entertaining British companies in awarding governing contracts because the British mass media (particularly the Sunday Times and Times) accused Malaysian politicians including Dr Mahathir of taking bribes from British companies.

The Sunday Times alleged that Wimpey International paid US\$50,000 which was meant for Malaysian politicians including Dr Mahathir to win a contract for building an aluminium smelter in Malaysia but the contract was not approved.

Malaysia denied the allegations and the Prime Minister made it clear that the allegations were baseless because the project was non-existent.

Asked to comment on the TUC concern, Dr Mahathir said it should urge the newspapers in Britain -- the source of the problem that led to Malaysia's action -- to stop publishing lies about the country rather than asking help from the British government and MTUC to resolve the situation.

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AH IDB

11/03/12-56MST

CNS6166

R GE 11-03 00198 RA247

aae tbe

Mahathir-Britain 3 Kuala Lumpur

"By right, they should urge their newspapers. We ask for very little... that is, don't tell lies," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's request was not difficult to fulfill because all that was needed was courage to tell the truth.

"Say what is true. If people are not involved in bribery, don't say there is bribery. If it is a loan and not a grant, say it is a loan and not a grant."

He said, however, that the mass media in Britain appeared to consider telling lies as forming part of press freedom.

Malaysia does not agree with that view because press freedom was limited to reporting the truth and did not extend to making false allegations or condemning someone, he added.

"If they (the newspapers in Britain) continue to do so, it is difficult for us to consider the interests of the workers in Britain. We must give priority to our nation," he said when asked if the government would withdraw its decision should MTUC make an appeal on behalf of TUC. -- more

AH LDB

11/03/13-10MST

R GE 11-03 00167 EA248

aae tbe

Mahathir-Britain 4 Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir was also asked if he would write to the Sunday Times, London, to seek that it correct its report containing the allegations of bribery made against Malaysian politicians and himself by reporting the truth.

"It's of no use for me to write to the Sunday Times which does not in the least feel at fault because they are the one who started all this," he said.

He added, however, that the Financial Times (London) had asked him for an explanation of the Cabinet decision. "I received a letter from the Financial Times, not Sunday Times, asking me to give my views. I might give some explanation."

He said Malaysia's action had nothing to do with allegations in the British press about a linkage between Malaysia's purchase of military equipment from Britain and British aid for construction of the Pergau hydroelectric dam in Kelantan. -- more

AH LDB

11/03/13-22MST

R GE 11-03 00188 EA254

aae the

Repeat

Mahathir-Britain 5 Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir was also asked about the decision of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, investigating the aid-for-arms allegation, to ask British Prime Minister John Major to show documents relating to the matter.

"That is their problem. We do not have a policy or law which says that to buy arms, we should not receive aid but they have (such provisions)," he said.

As such, he added, it was not Malaysia's problem if the select committee found that the British government was at fault and condemned it or toppled the government.

He said Malaysia had at no time made any reaction to the allegation that there was a link between the Pergau dam project and the purchase of weapons from Britain but it only acted on the allegations of corruption.

On his meeting with GEC chairman Lord Pryor two days ago, Dr Mahathir said the latter was only seeking information on the cause of Malaysia's action with regards to British companies. -- more

AH LDB

11/03/14-01MST

CNS6211

R GE 11-03 00186 EA255

aae the

Mahathir-Britain 6 (last) Kuala Lumpur

As a businessman, Pryor was concerned over the situation and he wanted to know how he could help overcome the problem, he added.

"I explained the true situation and expressed how disappointed we were by the attitude of the British newspapers and stand taken by some of the leaders of that country who defended the lies in the newspapers," he said.

He described Pryor's visit as one "by an acquaintance on another acquaintance."

Later, met by reporters after he visited the Paediatrics Institute at the Kuala Lumpur Hospital, here, Dr Mahathir said he had yet to read a small article in yesterday's edition of The Times (London) about a report to be published by it tomorrow.

Yesterday, a reader in London sent a fax of the article which said the newspaper would publish a report entitled "Politics, Power and Malaysia's Playboy Princes".

The article, written by Juliana Pitman, was accompanied by a photograph of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Azlan Shah. -- Bernama

AH/RA LDB