

04/08/1997

Dirty Bukit Bintang irks Prime Minister (HL)

Patvinder Singh

PETALING JAYA, Sun. - In an angry rebuke of Malaysians for their lack of consciousness about cleanliness, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for stern action against litterbugs after visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif commented about the rubbish along Jalan Bukit Bintang here.

Dr Mahathir said the people should be ashamed that while Malaysia was praised for cleanliness there were those who continued to litter.

"Do they think others are coolies who have to clean up their dirt? We are not their coolies!" a visibly upset Dr Mahathir told reporters after seeing Nawaz off at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang.

The Prime Minister had earlier called on Nawaz at the Regent Hotel in Jalan Bukit Bintang to accompany him to the airport. Nawaz, his wife Begum Kulsoom and his 50-member entourage had stayed at the hotel during their three-day official visit.

Dr Mahathir's outburst came in the midst of questions about American currency trader George Soros seeking a meeting with him to clarify his position on speculative attacks on several Asean currencies, including the ringgit.

After answering the question, he said: "In the meantime, I want to tell you that Jalan Bukit Bintang is very dirty and every night these people sit there and drink and throw cans around the place. I think we should take action against them."

"I feel ashamed because Nawaz Sharif had made a comment that Kuala Lumpur is very clean.

"Then he went to Lot 10 (shopping centre) last night and later as he walked back to his hotel he saw rubbish, like a jungle. You know, we urge people to maintain cleanliness but they still do not know how to protect our country's image.

"People like this ought to be acted against sternly. We don't care if they want to sit there and enjoy themselves but do not litter.

"They sit under the tree, dumping cans, cigarette butts and all kinds of things.

"Do they think everybody else are coolies who have to clean up their dirt? We are not their coolies!"

He was referring to a tree on the pavement beside the Regent Hotel where Nawaz had stayed during his three-day official visit. (see picture)

Asked if it was just along the pavement that there was rubbish, Dr Mahathir said: "All along the street. You go and see what it looks like. We should be ashamed.

"People praise us and they (litterbugs) do this. Should everybody be a coolie and clean up their rubbish? Don't they know how to keep their own city clean? If they want to litter go home and dirty their own house!"

The motorcade with the two Prime Ministers passed the area on the way to the airport.

Asked what action he wanted to be taken and if legislation was required, he said: "We'll take action against them. Legislation is of no use if they have that kind of mentality."

When the NST reporter passed by at 7.45am there were about a dozen youths lounging in the area, some of them bleary-eyed. The area was strewn with soft drink cans, paper cups, plastic bags, and cigarette packs and butts.

Rosli Mohd Sabu, 26, a counter clerk of the nearby 7-11 outlet, said youths begin to converge outside the outlet everyday after 6pm.

"They will be smoking, drinking and skateboarding. Most of them "lepak" till early morning, some all night," Rosli said.

Chandrika Lingam, 25, a receptionist at a 24-hour clinic near the tree, said the skateboarding sometimes starts in the afternoon and was a nuisance.

Asked if guests had complained about the rubbish in the area, a Regent Hotel employee said there had been no complaints about the litter but about the noise from illegal motorcycle racing along Jalan Bukit Bintang.

(END)