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`Malaysia had no intention to snub Brown'

Joseph Bingkasan in London

MALAYSIA will always welcome the visit of British leaders and its people either for official, business or social purposes, a Malaysian High Commission spokesman said on Wednesday.

He said there was much that could still be done for the mutual benefit of the two nations through bilateral visits at various levels.

The spokesman was commenting on a report by The Guardian on Wednesday which accused Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad of having refused a meeting with Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister) Gordon Brown.

The report on the front page was headlined "Snub for Brown as Malaysian PM too busy to talk". The report claimed that Dr Mahathir's refusal to meet Brown was blamed on the adverse British Press coverage of Malaysia's action in deporting Indonesian illegal immigrants.

Brown is on a tour of Southeast Asia to assess the region's economic problems before the G7 finance ministers' meeting in Birmingham this weekend.

The High Commission regretted that there should have been any reference to such a thought as there was no intention on Malaysia's part to "snub" Brown.

The Prime Minister's inability to receive Brown was simply due to lack of time. Brown arrived in Kuala Lumpur about 7pm on May 5 and was warmly received by Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. They then had a discussion over dinner hosted by Anwar.

About 8am the following day, Brown left for the airport to proceed to Jakarta.

The commission said Brown's stay for only a night in Kuala Lumpur had not given any opportunity at all for Dr Mahathir to receive him.

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