

# PM: Caddafi 'grilled' me

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## He wanted to know how we developed

■ By K: PARKARAN

ON BOARD MH4802: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was invited three times by Muammar Gaddafi during his two-day visit to Libya, said he was "grilled" by the Libyan leader on how he had overcome so many odds to develop Malaysia to what it is today.

The Prime Minister, who said that he was surprised over the unscheduled invitations, said Gaddafi had also wanted to meet him yesterday before his departure to Bahrain for a two-day official visit, but he had to decline because of his tight schedule.

"He was amazed at the way we have developed Malaysia and wanted to know how we overcame the financial crisis, managed the economy and attracted foreign investment successfully.

"He especially wanted to know what we did to reject the powerful financial bodies in the world during our crisis," he said on board the chartered Malaysia Airline Boeing 777 ferrying 160-member delegation comprising Cabinet Ministers, Mentris Besar, senior government officials and businessmen on a week-long official visit to Morocco, Libya and Bahrain.

Dr Mahathir had to cancel two scheduled press conferences in Libya for Malaysian and foreign journalists because of his very tight programme and the two unscheduled meet-

ings with Gaddafi.

"According to Malaysian and Libyan officials in Trinoli, no other visiting government head had been accorded this treatment.

"He grilled me until 12.30am (Saturday morning) on our country. Gaddafi was very interested to know how we formulate our foreign policies.

"I have met so many government leaders who face economic problems but no one had asked me how we manage our economy," he said when asked to describe his meetings with Gaddafi.

Asked on his personal impression of Gaddafi, the Prime Minister said he was a friendly but "angry man" because of what had happened during the time when Italians were in power during the colonial days.

He said Gaddafi had also asked him why he was going to the United States next month.

"I told him it's good for us to go to the US because we want to know what is the country's stand. And maybe we can develop it (ties) after that," he said.

Asked what were Gaddafi's view on Malaysia's definition of terrorism, Dr Mahathir replied:

"We have defined terrorism and the world is supposed to believe that our definition is correct. But some people say Israelis are not terrorists and that they are peace-loving people."

"Our stand is either you condemn both sides or don't condemn at all," he said.