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Mahathir-Visit

DR MAHATHIR'S VIEWS HIGHLY RESPECTED

By: Zulkefli Salleh

JEDDAH, Oct 21 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has continued to command international respect for his determination in fighting for the interests of developing countries, judging from the public reaction in countries he has visited.

In his visit to India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the prime minister has received wide coverage in the local newspapers.

The public from taxi drivers, businessmen to intellectuals have followed his visit through the newspapers and praised his vocal stand on issues facing Muslims, like the Palestine and Iraq issues.

The prime minister left for home this morning after ending a two-day working visit to Saudi Arabia.

Before visiting Saudi Arabia, Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, had visited India and Pakistan beginning Oct 16.

"He is a good and brave leader. His stands on the issues of Palestine, terrorism and Iraq are very clear," said Abdul Rahman, a Bangladeshi taxi driver here.

Apart from holding discussions with the heads of government on bilateral relations and international issues, Dr Mahathir also delivered the keynote address at economic seminars in India and Saudi Arabia.

Businessmen and economic planners in India and Saudi Arabia have shown deep interest in Malaysia's economic achievements, including its success in overcoming the 1997 financial crisis.

Dr Mahathir also received warm reception and loud applause from dialogue participants for his views on various international issues.

At the opening of the Jeddah Economic Forum 2003 organised by the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) here yesterday, Saudi entrepreneurs sought Dr Mahathir's opinion on the benefits of joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The Prime Minister has encouraged Saudi Arabia and developing countries to be active members of WTO so that the organisation would not only benefit the rich and strong countries.

Dr Mahathir, in his meeting with Saudi corporate leaders and businessmen at JCCI, also took the opportunity to screen a video on Langkawi as a resort island, including the marina facilities available there.

He also promoted other resort islands in Malaysia, including Tioman.

He also performed the umrah in Mecca.

-- BERNAMA

ZS AHH YBY