

22 APR 2002

Mahathir-Opportunity

PM SAYS BALL IS NOW IN PRIVATE SECTOR'S COURT

SEPANG, April 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today described his week-long trip to Morocco, Libya and Bahrain as "very good" as it has managed to ensure support for possible economic and trade linkages between Malaysia and these countries.

Speaking to reporters upon his return at the KL International Airport (KLIA), here, the prime minister said the three Arab countries presented good potential for Malaysian investors, traders and contractors.

"We have opened the doors, established the contact with the governments and we have ensured their support. So it is up to the private sector now to work hard," he said.

He said that throughout the visit, the question that was constantly asked was how Malaysia changed from being an agricultural economy to an industrialised one.

"They wanted to know how and we tried to explain. And I think they will be visiting us to find out more," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi showed particular interest in learning about Malaysia's development.

"Gaddafi met me three times and literally grilled me in every aspect of the Malaysian economy," he said, noting that he also learned a few things while abroad, including water management in Libya.

The prime minister said the Palestine-Israel conflict was brought up in all the three countries as Rabat, Tripoli and Manama expressed anger with Israel and disappointment over the attitude of the United States (US) in its support for the Jewish regime.

"Because it's clear that (the US) supports Israel although in (the refugee camps in) Jenin hundreds have been killed, clearly by Israeli forces including those who demolished the houses with the occupants still inside," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was an extraordinary and inhumane act of terrorism committed by a party that had previously appealed for world sympathy because they were being killed by the Nazis.

"But now they commit even worse atrocities. Some people call (Israeli Prime Minister Ariel) Sharon a man of peace. If he is a man of peace, then all suicide bombers are also men of peace," he said.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said the Jewish lobby in the US was very powerful due to their unity and as such, was able to determine the winner of an election.

In contrast, the Muslims there were disunited and never acted together, he said.

"As a result, they cannot determine who wins the election but the Jews can. It is like in Malaysia. In a Malay constituency, the minority Chinese determine who wins because the Malays are split into two.

"In a Chinese constituency, the Malays determine which Chinese party will win because the Chinese are also divided into two," he said.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about the appointment of the new Umno information chief, a post vacated by Datuk Mustapa Mohamed.

He said the matter would be looked into at the next Umno supreme council meeting.

-- BERNAMA

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