

15 MAR 2003

Ling-India

NO KNEE-JERK REACTION PLEASE, INDIA TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 (Bernama) -- Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik today expressed hope that the Indian Government will wait for the outcome of the full investigation ordered by the Malaysian Government into claims of police high-handedness against Indian IT professionals before taking any further action on the matter.

Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had directed the Inspector General of Police to conduct a full probe and Dr Ling hoped the Indian authorities would not hurriedly take any "after effect" action against Malaysia.

"I hope the Indian (authorities) will wait, don't hurry into any action as Malaysia and India have good relations and the two prime ministers (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Atal Bihari Vajpayee) are getting along very well," he told reporters here.

Dr Ling was asked on reports from New Delhi that India was still angry over the alleged ill-treatment of Indian software professionals and was planning to cancel all bilateral visits, ground extra landing slots for Malaysia Airlines and other measures that could hurt Malaysia.

The Hindustan Times reported that India was also considering excluding Malaysian companies from road construction projects and freezing Malaysian palm oil imports.

Dr Ling said the landing rights for Malaysia Airlines, particularly the extra landing rights to Mumbai were negotiated and agreed two months back between him and his Indian counterpart.

Therefore, he hoped India would not take any drastic action to suspend the rights as this could spoil all the good work which had been done by both sides all this while.

"I know my Indian counterpart very well and I don't want this good relations to be spoiled. Let us wait for the result or details and I hope India's Government will be a little bit more patient," he said.

Last Sunday, police raided Palm Court apartments in Brickfields and detained 165 Indian nationals, mainly IT specialists, following reports they were in the country illegally.

The Indians said they were treated roughly and some claimed their passports were defaced, resulting in Indian High Commissioner to Malaysia Veena Sikri lodging a diplomatic protest against the alleged ill-treatment.

Abdullah had assured the Indian Government that he would personally get to the bottom of the incident and said Indians were not being targeted by the police.

-- BERNAMA

AT KHY AAM