



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
CANBERRA

STATEMENT BY A SPOKESMAN FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

The Malaysian Government has made no official protest to Australia and, according to the Malaysian Foreign Ministry, has taken no action to downgrade the relationship. We welcome this and believe it is appropriate.

In response to problems which have emerged in the bilateral relationship over recent days, the Australian Government has made official and high-level representations to the Malaysian Government through our High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur and to the Malaysian High Commissioner in Canberra.

We have underlined the following points in those meetings:

- The Prime Minister values Australia's relationship with Malaysia and wants to build on it
- The Prime Minister accepts that on some issues Australia and Malaysia will not see eye-to-eye
- Both Governments need to avoid a situation in which the media is setting the tone of the relationship
- We hope that both Governments will act in a way which clearly draws a line under what has happened and avoid any further deterioration in the relationship or any slide into tit-for-tat retaliation

The Prime Minister has also written a personal letter to Dr Mahathir in which he has made the following points:

- This issue has been blown out of proportion and it is not in the long term interests of either Australia or Malaysia for it to continue
- The Prime Minister's remarks in Seattle were not calculated to give offence to Dr Mahathir. Rather, they were made to make clear that it was a decision for Malaysia, and Dr Mahathir, if Malaysia wished to absent itself from the APEC meeting and that Australia had clear design interests in the architecture of APEC, interests which it would defend vigorously
- The Prime Minister considers that this issue can only be settled if both countries are willing to put it behind them

- If this was the case, the bilateral relationship between Australia and Malaysia could flourish

The Prime Minister believes the bilateral relationship between Australia and Malaysia has substantial potential and wants to see it continue to develop.

CANBERRA

December 2, 1993