

FROM ABDUL RAHMAN SULAIMAN '84. MAHATHIR'S RELATIONS

PORT MORESBY, AUG. 8 (BERNAMA) -- MALAYSIA WILL RE-EXAMINE ITS RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND TO GIVE GREATER EMPHASIS ON ECONOMIC INTERACTION, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

HE TOLD MALAYSIAN NEWSMEN HERE ON THE EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE FOR AN EIGHT-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE TWO COUNTRIES THAT SUCH A SECOND LOOK WAS NECESSARY AS THE CURRENT RELATIONS FOCUSED TOO MUCH ON EDUCATION.

+ THERE SHOULD DEFINITELY BE MORE ECONOMIC INTERACTION BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND THE TWO COUNTRIES AS ALL THIS WHILE WE ARE CONCENTRATING TOO MUCH ON EDUCATION, + HE SAID.

THE PRIME MINISTER WHO IS WINDING UP HIS TWO-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA FELT THAT THERE WAS A LOT OF SCOPE FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND AUSTRALIA AS WELL AS NEW ZEALAND.

HE SAID MALAYSIA ON ONE HAND AND AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND ON THE OTHER SHOULD EXPLORE NEW AREAS IN WHICH THEY COULD COOPERATE. -

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR LEAVES FOR CANBERRA TOMORROW. HE WILL BE IN AUSTRALIA UNTIL AUG. 14 DURING WHICH HE IS SCHEDULED TO HOLD TALKS WITH HIS AUSTRALIAN COUNTERPART, ENCIK BOB HAWKE.

HE WILL THEN PROCEED TO NEW ZEALAND FOR TALKS WITH PRIME MINISTER DAVID LANGE.

THE PRIME MINISTER WHO WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE, DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA D.R. SITI HASMAH, FOREIGN MINISTER, TENGKU AHMAD RITHAUDDEEN, EDUCATION MINISTER, DATUK ABDULLAH HAJI AHMAD BADAWI AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS WILL RETURN HOME ON AUG. 17.

HE IS EXPECTED TO UNDERLINE MALAYSIA'S WISH FOR THE NEW EMPHASIS IN HER RELATIONS WITH THE TWO COUNTRIES DURING HIS SCHEDULED TALKS WITH THE RESPECTIVE PRIME MINISTERS.

OTHER TOPICS LIKELY TO BE BROUGHT UP DURING THE DISCUSSIONS ARE KAMPUCHEA, ANTARCTICA AND OTHER BILATERAL ISSUES.

STRESSING THE NEED FOR THE NEW KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH AUSTRALIA, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF MALAYSIA PLAYING THE ROLE OF A HALF-WAY HOUSE TO PROCESS AUSTRALIA'S RAW MATERIALS FOR EXPORT TO THIRD COUNTRIES. - MORE

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HE SAID MALAYSIA WAS IN A BETTER POSITION TO PLAY SUCH A ROLE IN VIEW OF HER ABUNDANT SUPPLY OF ENERGY, COMPETITIVE COST OF LABOUR IN ADDITION TO A HOST OF OTHER FACILITIES.

+ IF THIS IS DONE, IT WILL DEFINATELY LESSEN AUSTRALIA'S BURDEN AS IT NOW HAS TO BEAR A HIGH ENERGY COST, + HE EXPLAINED.

ANOTHER POSSIBILITY WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER MENTIONED AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING THE CURRENT ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE TWO COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY WITH AUSTRALIA? WAS THE NEED FOR MALAYSIAN BUSINESSMEN TO SELL MORE TO THE AUSTRALIANS.

+ THERE IS A GREAT NEED FOR US TO EXPLORE THE AUSTRALIAN MARKET, + HE SAID.

+ HOWEVER, THIS IS UP TO OUR BUSINESSMEN, + HE ADDED.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WAS CERTAIN THAT THERE WOULD BE SOME WISE PEOPLE WHO WOULD NOT AGREE OR OBJECT TO HIS SUGGESTION.

+ THEY WILL SAY, AH... THAT'S NOT GOOD. BECAUSE IT IS NOT GOOD, THEY WILL NEVER SELL, + HE SAID, --MORE

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D'ATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID JUST BECAUSE THESE PEOPLE THOUGH THAT SUCH AN EFFORT WAS NOT GOOD THEY WOULD NOT DO ANYTHING TO CARRY IT OUT WITHOUT REALISING THAT THEY WERE NOT CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS REDUCING THE CURRENT INVISIBLE TRADE DEFICIT FACED BY THE COUNTRY.

HE ALSO HIT OUT AT + BIG SPENDERS + WHO WENT ABROAD FOR + HOLIDAYS AND NOT TO INVEST. + HE STRONGLY FELT THAT THESE PEOPLE SHOULD SPEND THEIR HOLIDAYS WITHIN THE COUNTRY AS MALAYSIA DID NOT LACK INTERESTING PLACES SUCH AS HILL RESORTS LIKE GENTING HIGHLANDS, FRASERS HILL AND CAMERON HIGHLANDS.

HE ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT BEFORE THE PEOPLE COULD BE PURSU'ADED TO CHANGE THEIR TASTE, + WE MUST MAKE THESE PLACES MORE ATTRACTIVE FOR THEM.

+ THAT'S WHY WE HAVE BEEN TALKING OF BUILDING GOOD ROADS LEADING TO SUCH PLACES.

+ AT THE MOMENT, A LOT OF MALAYSIANS GO TO GENTING HIGHLANDS FOR HOLIDAY? SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY CAN GET THERE EASILY BECAUSE OF THE AVAILABILITY OF GOOD ROAD.

+ I'M SURE MORE PEOPLE WILL GO TO FRASER'S HILL AND OTHER PLACES IF THEY ARE SERVED WITH GOOD ROADS, + HE SAID. --MORE

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THE PRIME MINISTER SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE TOURISM FACILITIES IN THE COUNTRY WOULD BE CARRIED OUT IN STAGES DUE TO THE CURRENT FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS.

HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT SOLELY DEPEND ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE TOWARDS THIS DIRECTION AS IT HAD BEEN PROVEN IN MANY INSTANCES THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO LEAD THE WAY TO SHOW TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR THAT A PARTICULAR PROJECT IS VIABLE BEFORE THE PRIVATE SECTOR COULD BE CONVINCED THAT IT IS SO.

HE MENTIONED THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO PASS THE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION-BUILT HOTELS TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR AS ONE OF THE MOVES WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WAS TAKING IN THIS RESPECT. -- BERNAMA