

MAHATHIR-TALKS
FROM ABDUL RAHMAN SULAIMAN

84

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CANBERRA, AUG. 9 (BERNAMA)--MALAYSIA AND AUSTRALIA HAVE IDENTIFIED POSSIBLE AREAS OF COOPERATION TO FURTHER ENHANCE THE ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL TIES.

THIS FOLLOWS THE FIRST ROUND OF TALKS BETWEEN DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD, HERE ON A SIX-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO AUSTRALIA, AND HIS AUSTRALIAN COUNTERPART BOB HAWKE AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE SHORTLY AFTER THE MALAYSIAN LEADER'S ARRIVAL HERE THIS AFTERNOON.

THE TWO LEADERS DISCUSSED BILATERAL MATTERS WHICH INCLUDED=

+ THE QUESTION OF ESTABLISHING JOINT VENTURE PROJECTS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF AUTOMOBILE COMPONENTS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES=

+ AUSTRALIA'S PROPOSAL TO INCREASE TARIFF ON MADE-IN-MALAYSIA AIR CONDITIONERS=

+ PROBLEMS RELATING TO FREIGHT CHARGES AND SHIPPING=

+ EDUCATIONAL MATTERS RELATING TO THE INTAKE OF MALAYSIAN STUDENTS INTO AUSTRALIA, THEIR LANGUAGE TEST REQUIREMENT, FEES AND THE RECOGNITION OF AUSTRALIA'S HIGHER INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING.

THE TALKS BEGAN WITH A FOUR-EYE MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO PRIME MINISTERS AFTER WHICH THEY WERE JOINED BY OTHER MEMBERS OF THEIR RESPECTIVE DELEGATIONS.--MORE

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FOREIGN MINISTER TENGKU AHMAD RITHAUDDEEN, EDUCATION MINISTER DATUK ABDULLAH HAJI AHMAD BADAWI, DEPUTY MINISTERS MEGAT JUNID MEGAT AYUB (PRIMARY INDUSTRIES), DR. TAN TIONG HONG (FINANCE) AND OO GIN SUN (TRADE AND INDUSTRY) MADE UP THE MALAYSIAN SIDE.

THE AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER WAS JOINED BY HIS DEPUTY, ENCIK LIONEL BOWEN, EDUCATION MINISTER PUAN SUSAN RYAN AND OTHER MINISTERS.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTRY'S SECRETARY-GENERAL TAN SRI ZAINAL ABIDIN SULONG, WHO DESCRIBED THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE TALKS AS +VERY FRIENDLY AND BUSINESS-LIKE+, SAID THE TWO PRIME MINISTERS WOULD MEET AGAIN TOMORROW FOR AN UNSCHEDULED SECOND ROUND OF DISCUSSIONS.

HE SAID TODAY'S TALKS WHICH CENTRED ON BILATERAL MATTERS WERE BASICALLY THE CONTINUATION OF THE EARLIER DISCUSSIONS THE TWO HAD HAD IN KUALA LUMPUR AND PORT MORESBY.

ENCIK HAWKE MET DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR DURING HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO MALAYSIA IN FEBRUARY AND DURING THE RECENTLY-CONCLUDED FOURTH MEETING OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION IN THE PAPUA-NEW GUINEAN CAPITAL.--MORE
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TAN SRIZAINAL DESCRIBED THE OUTCOME OF TODAY'S MEETING AS SATISFACTORY.

HE SAID OFFICIALS FROM BOTH SIDES WOULD FOLLOW UP ON THE DECISIONS REACHED BY THE TWO LEADERS.

THE SECOND ROUND OF TALKS TOMORROW WAS DECIDED UPON BY THE TWO PRIME MINISTERS THEMSELVES AS THEY FELT THAT THERE WERE OTHER MATTERS NOT COVERED TODAY DUE TO INSUFFICIENT TIME.

DURING THE DISCUSSIONS TODAY, THE AUSTRALIAN LEADER BRIEFED DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR ON THE VARIOUS STEPS HIS GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN SINCE THEIR LAST MEETING IN KUALA LUMPUR.

ON THE JOINT VENTURE PROPOSAL, ENCIK HAWKE TOLD DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR THAT AUSTRALIA STILL NEEDED TIME TO STUDY THE MATTER.

HE ALSO SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO WITHDRAW ITS EARLIER PROPOSAL TO INCREASE TARIFF ON MADE-IN-MALAYSIA AIR CONDITIONERS FOLLOWING MALAYSIA'S REPRESENTATION.

ON SHIPPING, THE TWO PRIME MINISTERS AGREED THAT BOTH MALAYSIA AND AUSTRALIA WERE NOT GETTING SUFFICIENT SHARE OF THE TRADE.--MORE

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EFFORTS WOULD BE MADE BY BOTH SIDES TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION THROUGH DISCUSSIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES, INCLUDING SINGAPORE AND INDONESIA.

TAN SRI ZAINAL SAID DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS MALAYSIA'S GENUINE CONCERN OVER THE HIGH RATE OF FREIGHT CHARGES FOR INTER-ISLAND SHIPPING, QUOTING AS AN EXAMPLE THE FACT THAT THE CHARGES BETWEEN KOTA KINABALU AND PORT KELANG WERE AS HIGH AS THOSE BETWEEN PORT KELANG AND NEW YORK.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR STRONGLY FELT THAT THIS HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE PHYSICAL DESIGN OF SHIPS WHICH WERE NOT SUITABLE FOR INTER-ISLAND USE.

HE REQUESTED THAT AUSTRALIA EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITY OF UNDERTAKING A STUDY ON THIS FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT.

ENCIK HAWKE EXPRESSED HIS READINESS TO STUDY THE MATTER.

OTHER ISSUES RAISED DURING THE TALKS WERE QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO TIN AND PALM OIL.

ON EDUCATION, THEY AGREED TO LET THEIR RESPECTIVE EDUCATION MINISTERS TO DISCUSS DETAILS.

DATUK ABDULLAH HAJI AHMAD BADAWI AND PUAN RYAN ARE ALSO SCHEDULED TO MEET TOMORROW.--BERNAMA