

MAHATHIR-POLICY

FROM ABDUL RAHMAN SULAIMAN 84

CANBERRA, AUG. 9 (BERNAMA)-- DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

TONIGHT WELCOMED AUSTRALIA'S NEW THRUST IN ITS FOREIGN POLICY WHICH PROMISES A CLOSER IDENTIFICATION WITH THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID WHILE THE IDEA WAS NOT NEW, MALAYSIA WAS STRUCK BY THE CONVICTION AND COMMITMENT WITH WHICH THE PRESENT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ARTICULATED ITS POLICY.

WE WHOLEHEARTEDLY WELCOME THIS NEW THRUST IN YOUR FOREIGN POLICY AND LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING CLOSELY WITH AUSTRALIA AS YOU REDUCE YOUR EUROCENTRIC STANCE AND BECOME MORE AND MORE A MEMBER OF THE REGION WHERE GEOGRAPHICALLY AND POLITICALLY YOU BELONG, HE SAID IN A SPEECH AT A DINNER GIVEN IN HONOUR BY HIS AUSTRALIAN COUNTERPART ENCIC BOB HAWKE HERE.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID HE LOOKED FORWARD TO THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND AUSTRALIA AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT THE BILATERAL RELATIONS AND REGIONAL INTERACTION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WOULD EXPAND MANIFOLD.

THE TWO COUNTRIES WERE IMPELLED BY THE DYNAMISM OF THE PACIFIC COUNTRIES TO UPGRADE THEIR COOPERATION FOR MUTUAL ADVANTAGE AND FOR THE GENERAL BENEFIT OF THE ENTIRE REGION. ---MORE

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NOTING THE AGREEMENT BY ASEAN MEMBER COUNTRIES AND THEIR PACIFIC DIALOGUE PARTNERS IN JAKARTA LAST MONTH TO BUILD UPON AND EXPAND THEIR CURRENT LEVEL OF COOPERATION, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WAS SPECIALLY HAPPY OVER THIS FIRST TENTATIVE STEP.

I AM CONVINCED THAT IF WE SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR US, THIS SMALL FIRST STEP WILL LEAD US TO THAT VISION OF THE FUTURE OF A DYNAMIC PACIFIC OR MORE REALISTICALLY, A WESTERN PACIFIC OR ASIA-PACIFIC COMMUNITY, HE SAID.

ENCIC HAWKE IN HIS SPEECH PLEDGED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT BE DEFLECTED FROM ITS PRESENT POLICY BY RACIST ATTITUDE EXPRESSED BY A SMALL MINORITY IN AUSTRALIA OF LATE.

BOTH MALAYSIA AND AUSTRALIA RECOGNISED THE ECONOMIC DYNAMISM OF THIS REGION AND THE OPPORTUNITIES IT PRESENTED.

HE SAID THE STRONG GROWTH ACHIEVED BY THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION HAD ENSURED THE ASIA-PACIFIC AREA A VITAL ROLE IN THE MAINTENANCE OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC PROSPERITY. ---MORE

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ON AUSTRALIA-MALAYSIA BILATERAL RELATIONS, ENCIC HAWKE SAID HE WAS DISSAPPOINTED THAT THE TWO-WAY TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES HAD GROWN VERY SLOWLY OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS BY COMPARISON WITH THE GROWTH THROUGHOUT THE 70S.

THIS WAS DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE LAST THREE YEARS HAD SEEN SIX MALAYSIAN TRADE MISSIONS VISITING AUSTRALIA, TWO MAJOR TRADE DISPLAYS, SIX TECHNICAL AND MARKETING SEMINARS, FOUR INVESTMENT MISSIONS TO AUSTRALIA AND THREE VISITS TO MALAYSIA BY GROUPS OF SENIOR AUSTRALIAN BUSINESSMEN.

HE SAID HE APPRECIATED MALAYSIA'S CONCERN OVER THE CURRENT TRADE IMBALANCE WITH AUSTRALIA AND ASSURED THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ENSURE A STEADY GROWTH IN THE TWO-WAY TRADE.

---BERNAMA