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FROM ABDUL RAHMANSULAIMAN 84

WELLINGTON 9 AUG. 15 (BERNAMA) -- NEW ZEALAND HAS GIVEN MALAYSIA AN ASSURANCE THAT IT WILL TAKE MEASURES TO REDUCE THE CURRENT TRADE IMBALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

THE ASSURANCE WAS GIVEN TO PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD BY HIS NEW ZEALAND COUNTERPART, ENCIK DAVID LANGE, DURING THEIR MEETING AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE HERE TODAY.

ENCIK LANGE TOLD A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE WITH DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR AFTER THE MEETING THAT NEW ZEALAND APPRECIATED THE CONCERN OVER THE TRADE DEFICIT WHICH WAS PRESENTLY IN THE RATIO 3:1 IN FAVOUR OF NEW ZEALAND.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID WHAT MALAYSIA WAS ASKING FOR WAS GREATER ACCESS TO NEW ZEALAND'S MARKET FOR MALAYSIA'S SIMPLE MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS.

+ I AM GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT WILL BE MAKING AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING ITS TRADE POLICY. WE WILL STUDY THIS AND WE CERTAINLY HOPE THAT IT WILL BENEFIT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES LIKE US, + HE SAID. -- MORE

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THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT IF MALAYSIA COULD GET GREATER ACCESS INTO THE NEW ZEALAND MARKET FOR ITS SIMPLE PRODUCTS, THIS WOULD DEFINITELY HELP IT IMPROVE THE OVERALL POSITION OF ITS FOREIGN TRADE.

+ I AGREE THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BALANCE UP TRADE BETWEEN ANY TWO COUNTRIES. BUT IF WE CAN REDUCE THE GAP, IT WILL CERTAINLY HELP US, + HE SAID.

DURING THE HOUR-LONG MEETING, THE TWO LEADERS EXCHANGED VIEWS ON KAMPUCHEA, ANTARCTICA AND THE PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR ENERGY AND OTHER ISSUES.

THEY ALSO DISCUSSED BILATERAL MATTERS, INCLUDING MALAYSIA'S REQUEST FOR MORE PLACES FOR ITS STUDENTS IN NEW ZEALAND'S INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING, MALAYSIA'S EMPHASIS ON ENHANCING COOPERATION AND TIES WITH DEVELOPING SOUTH PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES AND THE EXCHANGE OF EXPERTISE IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGY.

ASKED WHETHER HE HAD MADE ANY SPECIFIC COMMITMENT TO DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WITH REGARD TO GREATER ACCESS BY MALAYSIAN STUDENTS TO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS HERE, ENCIK LANGE SAID HE WAS IN NO POSITION TO DO SO AS CERTAIN FACULTIES -- LIKE ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE

-- IN UNIVERSITIES IN NEW ZEALAND WERE ALSO FACING PRESSURES FROM LOCAL STUDENTS. -- MORE

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+INCIDENTLY, THESE ARE THE FACULTIES WHICH ARE ALSO IN GREAT DEMAND BY MALAYSIAN STUDENTS, + HE SAID.

+I CANNOT EVEN GIVE ASSURANCE FOR PLACES FOR OUR OWN STUDENTS, LET ALONE OTHERS, + HE EXPLAINED.

HOWEVER, THE NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT OTHER LESS TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS, PARTICULARLY THE MASSEY UNIVERSITY AND THE LINCOLN AGRICULTURE COLLEGE, WOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PLACES FOR MALAYSIAN STUDENTS FOR COURSES IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGY.

ENCIK LANGE ALSO WELCOMED MALAYSIA'S NEW THRUST IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE DEVELOPING SOUTH PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES.

HE SAID HE AND DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR DISCUSSED THE SUBJECTS WHILE THEY WERE IN PORT MORESBY LAST WEEK FOR THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT REGIONAL MEETING.

+I LIKE ST. IT PROVIDES A NEW FOCUS IN RELATIONS AMONG COUNTRIES IN SOUTH PACIFIC REGION WITHOUT UPSURPING RELATIONS WITH NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA. AUSTRALIA ALSO WELCOMED IT WHILE THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WERE THE HAPPIEST, + HE SAID. -- BERNAMA.