

EGYPT  
BY AHMAD REJAL ARBEE

CAIRO, DEC 12 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD LAST NIGHT CALLED ON EGYPT TO JOINTLY SEEK OUT WITH MALAYSIA NEW AND WIDER AVENUES FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION TO COMPLEMENT THEIR RESPECTIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN THE SPIRIT OF SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION.

HE MADE THE CALL WITHIN HOURS OF HIS ARRIVAL HERE TO BEGIN A FOUR-DAY VISIT TO EGYPT AS PART OF A CURRENT 12-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO THREE ISLAMIC AFRICAN COUNTRIES.

SPEAKING AT A STATE BANQUET AT THE TAHRIR CLUB HERE, GIVEN IN HIS HONOUR BY HIS EGYPTIAN COUNTERPART KAMAL HASSAN ALY, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR CONTINUED WITH HIS CURRENT THEME OF STEPPING UP SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION IN THE LIGHT OF FAILURE OF THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE.

HE SAID ALL DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WERE NOW FACING THEIR MOST IMPORTANT CHALLENGE IN NEEDING TO ENHANCE THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

+THIS IS PARTICULARLY SO WHEN WE ARE FACED WITH AN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER THAT IS MANIFESTLY UNFAIR AND BIASED AGAINST THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT EGYPT HAD ALWAYS BEEN A GREAT CHAMPION OF THE STRUGGLE TO BRING ABOUT A FUNDAMENTAL REVISION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM.

+BUT EVEN THE BEST OF EFFORTS CANNOT BRING ABOUT THIS MUCH-NEEDED REFORM UNLESS THERE IS SOME RESPONSE FROM THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT, IF THERE WAS NO RESPONSE FROM THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, IT WAS THE DUTY OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES THEMSELVES TO FULFILL THE ASPIRATIONS OF THEIR PEOPLES FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROGRESS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR AND HIS DELEGATION ARRIVED HERE AT 7 LAST NIGHT (1 AM TODAY IN MALAYSIA) AFTER A TWO-HOUR STOPOVER IN FALERMO, SICILY, AND WERE WELCOMED AT THE AIRPORT BY ENCIK KAMAL HASSAN ALY AND HIS WIFE.

THE PRIME MINISTER TOUCHED ON MALAYSIA-EGYPT BILATERAL RELATIONS WHICH HE SAID WENT BACK TO BEFORE MALAYSIA'S INDEPENDENCE IN 1957. --

SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FORMAL DIPLOMATIC TIES, THE RELATIONSHIP HAD PROGRESSED IN QUANTUM LEAPS FREE OF ANY REAL PROBLEMS.

HE SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN MANY EXCHANGES OF VISITS BETWEEN LEADERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES SO MUCH SO THAT THEY WERE NO LONGER STRANGERS TO EACH OTHER.

THE PEOPLES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES HAD ALSO ENJOYED WIDE-RANGING EXCHANGES THROUGH EDUCATIONAL, RELIGIOUS AND TRADE AND ECONOMIC CONTACTS.

THE TWO COUNTRIES ALSO HAD A LONG TRADITION OF CONTACT IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD WITH MANY ASPIRING TO GO TO AL-AZHAR UNIVERSITY.

TODAY, THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF MALAYSIAN STUDENTS AT THE VARIOUS UNIVERSITIES IN EGYPT.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WILL BEGIN HIS VISIT TO EGYPT WITH THE LAYING OF A WREATH AT THE TOMO OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER TODAY FOLLOWING WHICH HE WILL VISIT THE AL-AZHAR MOSQUE.

HE WILL THEN HAVE A MEETING WITH THE SHEIKH AL-AZHAR IN JEDDAH. OFFICIAL TALKS WILL BEGIN IN THE LATE AFTERNOON. -- BERNAMA

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