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BRITAIN HAS NO RESERVATIONS ABOUT EAEC, SAY:: HURD

Hurd

PETALING JAYA, July 29 (Bernama)-- Britain has no reservations about Malaysia's proposal for an East Asia Economic Caucus.. (EAEC), British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said here today.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, whom he met yesterday, had explained that the EAEC was not, a restrictive trading bloc but was compatible with the principles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

+On behalf of Britain I would say we have no reservations about the proposal and it is clear that it does not amount to a restrictive trade bloc and it is compatible with everybody's obligations at the GATT,+ he told a news conference after delivering a lecture at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations here.

Hurd, who is on a two-day visit after attending a meeting of dialogue partners of Asean in Manila, said his visit to Malaysia was exceptionally pleasant and productive.

Besides meeting the Prime Minister, he also held talks with Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, and would meet Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak tonight before returning home at midnight. -- more

▼29/07/20-12MST

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Hurd 2 Petaling Jaya

Hurd said Malaysia was moving forward with very impressive growth at a time when much of the world was in recession.

The balance of trade with Britain was now in Malaysia's favour, with Malaysia's exports last year amounting to 922 million pounds sterling (about M\$4.3 billion) while Britain exported goods worth 593 million pounds sterling (about M\$2.7 billion) to Malaysia over the same period.

+We are doing things here as well as you are doing things in Britain, British counsellors have been asked try 'your Prime Minister to improve the teaching of English language in Malaysian schools,+ he said.

+For example, your car the Proton Saga is now the best selling car of its class in Britain,+ he said.

Both the countries have worked out a twinning agreement to bring 1,500 Malaysian students to Britain for training as English language teachers.

He also said that Britain had provided 1.35 million pounds sterling (about M\$6.3 million) towards research programme to be conducted in Malaysia for sustainable development of forests in Southeast Asia. -- more

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Hurd 3 Petaling Jaya

The British Foreign Secretary said Britain was now the largest investor in Malaysia from Europe, its investments totalling about 2.5 billion pounds sterling (about M\$11.7 billion).

+Dr Mahathir had made it clear that more British high-tech investments will be welcomed in Malaysia, + he added.

Britain had helped with concessional finance for various projects and Malaysia had been the largest single recipient of about 300 million pounds sterling (about M\$1.4 billion) in 1986 for projects worth over one billion pounds sterling (about M\$4.7 billion), including the North Butterworth container terminal and the Pergau hydro-electric scheme.

On defence, Britain was also selling 28 Hawk aircraft, two frigates and air defence radar command control communication equipment.

+We have a major commitment to the Malaysian Armed Forces, we are glad about it and will continue to honour it, + he added. -- more

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Hurd 4 (last) Petaling Jaya

Hurd said that during his two-day stay here, he found that Britain in the European Community and Malaysia in Asean were at ease with each other.

+We discussed things easily and comfortably because we have shared objectives, we both want the organisations to move in the + he added.

He foresaw more intensive and productive political discussions between the two countries as events moved and as their organisations changed.

Earlier, in his lecture, Hurd expressed his opinions on international issues including the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina. -- Bernama

▼29/07/20-51MST