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Mahathir-talks

BANGLADESH PROFESSIONALS FOR MALAYSIA

from Azman Ujang 93

DHAKA, Feb 13 (Bernama) -- Bangladesh, which has so far been supplying Malaysia with workers mainly for its plantation and construction industries, wants to send professionals like doctors and engineers, opening up a new dimension in bilateral relations.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, during talks here today with her Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, asked Malaysia to consider taking in skilled and trained manpower in addition to the 18,000 workers now already in the country.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told Malaysian journalists after the talks that Bangladesh could also make available nurses, accountants and other professionals.

"This is a new development in our relations and we will look into this. It is also up to agencies which are willing to accept these professionals to work things out," he said.

Abdullah, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and several senior Malaysian officials also attended the talks on the second day of Dr Mahathir's three-day official visit to Bangladesh. -- more

13/02/20-33MST

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Mahathir-talks 2 Dhaka

Abdullah said Begum Zia was also anxious to have Malaysia Airlines (MAS) begin its services to Dhaka to step up people-to-people contact between both countries.

Although Biman, the Bangladesh airline, flies to Kuala Lumpur thrice a week, MAS has yet to start its services to Bangladesh.

"Malaysia is considering whether such services should be started by MAS or our other domestic airline, Pelangi.

"This has not been decided," he added. Bangladesh also asked Malaysia to consider granting recognition to more of its medical colleges to allow more Malaysians to take up medical studies in the country.

"They have told us that Britain recognises the medical degree from a number of colleges in Bangladesh. This is actually an old issue which has yet to be resolved but which will be taken up again," he said.

Malaysia now only recognises the medical degree from the Dhaka Medical College. -- more

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The two prime ministers also discussed Bangladesh's proposal to set up, with Malaysian assistance, an institution to manage the annual pilgrimage by Muslims to Mecca, similar to the highly successful Pilgrims Management and Fund Board (Tabung Haji) in Malaysia.

"The fact that Tabung Haji has become a commercial entity with investments in many sectors has generated tremendous interest in Bangladesh.

"We will see how Malaysia can help them set up such a body here," Abdullah added.

He said that from the talks, Bangladesh had shown clear intention to enhance its economic cooperation with Malaysia especially through increased trade and investment.

"Bangladesh also wants Malaysia to buy more of its products, including rice. We will look into this as a means of narrowing the trade surplus which is now very much in Malaysia's favour," he said.

Their two-way trade totalled US\$56.8 million in 1991 and US\$51 million for the first five months of last year.

Bangladesh only accounts for about 0.1 per cent of Malaysia's total trade while Malaysia accounts for 0.5 per cent of Bangladesh's total trade.

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Mahathir-talks 4 (last) Dhaka

Earlier, Dr Mahathir called on Bangladesh President Abdur Rahman Biswas at the Presidential Palace.

In the morning, Dr Mahathir flew by helicopter to Savar where he laid a wreath at the National Memorial to pay respects to those who died in the Liberation War which led to the founding of Bangladesh in 1971.

He later opened the Malaysian Trade Centre here. The centre, aimed at promoting trade and investment between the two countries, is run by a joint-venture company formed by the Concord Group of Companies of Bangladesh and some private entrepreneurs of Malaysia. -- Bernama