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Mahathir-Vietnam (EMBARGO: For release at 10pm today, March 25)  
SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES ADVISED TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS PEACEFULLY

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KUALA LUMPUR, March 25 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Southeast Asian countries should resolve problems among themselves in a peaceful manner, while cooperating in all areas which will bring mutual benefit.

"We must realise the dream of a peaceful, stable and united Southeast Asian region," he said at a dinner he hosted for the visiting General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Encik Do Muoi.

Do Muoi arrived here yesterday for a four-day official visit, accompanied by a 33-member delegation which includes politicians, businessmen and journalists.

Reiterating his view that all 10 Southeast Asian countries should eventually join Asean, Dr Mahathir said there is greater need to preserve understanding, strengthen goodwill and nurture cooperation among them given the global changes and developments.

"We must create the conditions which will enable us to move forward to meet the various challenges," he said, adding that the fostering of friendship and good neighbourliness among them would contribute to a stable, peaceful and prosperous region. -- more

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Mahathir-Vietnam 2 Kuala Lumpur (EMBARGO)

"We should speak with one voice on issues of common concern," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Hanoi's accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and Asean's decision to grant observer status to Vietnam at its ministerial meetings were significant developments in its relations with other countries in the region.

"This offers excellent prospects for long term cooperative association between Vietnam and its neighbours leading to Vietnam's own membership within Asean," he added.

Malaysia, he said, followed with great interest Vietnam's effort to promote economic development which had already brought about some impressive results.

In this respect, Malaysia welcomed the decision by United States President Bill Clinton to lift the American trade embargo on Vietnam last month.

On their effort to promote bilateral relations and cooperation over the past few years, he said it had brought many positive results which they could be proud of. -- more

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Their bilateral trade which stood at RM235.4 million in 1991 had increased to RM473 million in the first nine months of last year.

The conclusion of the Bilateral Payments Arrangement (BPA), which had contributed to the trade increase, is an innovative and viable mechanism for promoting trade between and among developing countries, he said.

He also said that over the last two years, Malaysian companies had undertaken to invest close to US\$426 million in Vietnam and that a Malaysian consortium had successfully begun the development of an Export Processing Zone in Danang with the official launching three days ago.

Dr Mahathir said there were other projects in which Malaysian companies were involved or had shown interest in, and he hoped the Vietnamese government would give them positive consideration. -- more

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Do Muoi, in reciprocating, said Vietnam would join Asean at an appropriate time, as it had become an observer and acceded to the Bali Treaty, because it always placed utmost importance on cooperation with neighbouring countries and regional countries.

"Vietnam will take a constructive part in the Regional Security Forum, support dialogues and initiatives aimed at promoting cooperation, including the initiative of the Prime Minister (Dr Mahathir) on the East Asia Economic Caucus," he said.

He stressed that Vietnam would persist in its four-point policy towards the regional countries which he made in October last year, aimed at rendering an active contribution to making South-east Asia a zone of peace, stability and development.

In the kaleidoscope of this changing world, he added, South-east Asia was a bright spot. He said that though there was still a number of potentially destabilising factors, the situation here was in general relatively stable after nearly half a century of confrontation and suspicion.

The regional countries, he pointed out, had shared interests in striving for peace, stability and cooperation. -- more

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The Vietnamese leader said in implementing its open, diversified and multilateralised foreign policy, Vietnam had striven to strengthen its relations with neighbouring countries, broaden relations with countries in South-East Asia and the Asia-Pacific region.

Vietnam had also maintained cooperation with countries with which it had traditional relationship, promote relations with industrialised nations in Europe and North America, and made progress in its relations with countries in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

On relations with Malaysia, Do Muoi said the two countries shared the aspiration for peace and cooperation and strive towards development and prosperity besides peace and stability in the region.

"These are solid foundations for our friendship and long-term cooperation in the interest of prosperity of each country, and cooperation and development in South-East Asia.

"We note with satisfaction that owing to the efforts by both sides over the past few years, we have forged a bilateral relationship full of fraternity and mutual understanding and trust," he said. -- more

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Mahathir-Vietnam 6 (last) Kuala Lumpur

Do Muoi expressed confidence that this trend would continue to grow fruitfully for the benefit of both countries.

He said Malaysia, which was a few decades ago known as one of the world's largest producers of rubber and tin, was now a country with an advanced industry, striving to become an industrialised nation in line with the aspiration of Vision 2020.

Vietnam, he said, was deeply impressed that the economic development in this country had been closely linked with the promotion of the rich national culture in an atmosphere of harmony among different ethnic groups of a unified community.

The Vietnamese leader said he was convinced that the industrious, dynamic and creative people of Malaysia, under the clear-sighted leadership of Dr Mahathir, and other Barisan Nasional leaders, would bring about prosperity for the country and make important contributions to the common prosperity of the region as well as the whole of Asia and the Pacific.

Lastly, Do Muoi told Dr Mahathir that after nearly half a century of arduous struggle to defend its national independence, sovereignty and unity, the Vietnamese people were now doing their best to build their fatherland, striving to become "a rich people, strong country and an equitable and civilised society". -- Bernama

ZAB MGN