

Malaysia, Tunisia to step up trade and bilateral relations

By Farush Khan

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Malaysia and Tunisia today laid the foundation for improved trade relations and bilateral co-operation in other fields.

In expressing their commitment, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Tunisian counterpart, Dr Hamed Karoui, who is on a three-day official visit to Malaysia, paved the way for the implementation of a number of programmes to achieve the goal.

Their determination was marked with the signing of an agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding immediately after their 45-minute meeting at the Prime Minister's Department.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi signed on Malaysia's behalf while Tunisia was represented by its Minister of Planning and Regional Development, Mr Mustapha Kamel Nabli.

Abdullah told a Press conference later that the agreement signed was to intensify their co-operation in the

field of economy, science and technology, investment and industrialisation.

Statistics for 1993 showed that Tunisia's total trade with Malaysia stood at RM16.47 million, its total imports from Malaysia RM12.49 million and its total exports RM3.98 million.

"The two leaders also agreed to set up a joint commission to explore the possibility of bilateral co-opera-

□ **SMALL COUNTRIES MUST UNITE TO VOICE THEIR ANXIETY ON ISSUES, SAYS PM: P2**

tion in other fields in the future," he said.

The MoU was to establish co-operation between various agencies of the two countries. Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha signed for Malaysia while Tunisia was represented by its Secretary of State for Scientific Research and Technology, Mr Mongi Safra.

For a start, such co-operation will involve the Malay-

sia Industrial Development Authority (Mida), the Standards and Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia (Sirim) and similar agencies in Tunisia.

The two countries will also set up a centre to jointly promote export and establish bilateral co-operation in tertiary education in the fields of science, technology and religion.

"Tunisia has offered places in their Ez-Zitouna University for our students while we provide them places in our institutes of higher learning, especially the International Islamic University."

Abdullah said Tunisia would also send their officers for attachment with the Tun Ismail Atomic Research Centre (Puspati) in Bangi in their joint efforts to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Dr Karoui, he said, had also suggested that Malaysia set up a Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) in Tunisia for the promotion of bilateral trade, which Malaysia would consider.

Abdullah said Malaysia would also consider setting up an embassy in the coun-

try. Matters concerning Tunisia are now handled by the Malaysian embassy in Rome. Tunisia uses its embassy in Jakarta to handle matters concerning Malaysia.

The two leaders, he said, also expressed their commitment to work towards achieving continuous peace in Muslim countries and to seek just settlement for war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Malaysia and Tunisia are among the countries which have committed their troops for peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia.

They also expressed displeasure over the current misconception of Islam and the Muslim world by the West and their (the two leaders) desire to correct the wrong impression.

Dr Karoui, who arrived yesterday with his wife, Rafiaa, and a 10-member delegation, was given a ceremonial welcome at Parliament Square here this morning.

Dr Karoui and his wife were met on arrival at the square by Dr Mahathir, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali and Abdullah. Deputy Health Minister Datuk Farid Ariffin was the Minister in Attendance.