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Mahathir-Award

MAHATHIR HAILED AS INSPIRATION TO THIRD WORLD

By: E.Sivabalan

CAPE TOWN, May 7 (Bernama) -- South Africa today conferred its highest award on Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, saying he "has been and is a source of inspiration to the developing world through his eminent leadership" in the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and other international fora.

The gold award Order of Good Hope (Class I) was bestowed on the Prime Minister by South African President Nelson Mandela at a ceremony at "Genanenda", his official residence here.

"In this context, he (Dr Mahathir) has aligned himself fully with South Africa in the promotion of South-South cooperation," according to the citation on the award released here today.

It said the award "is given by South Africa to honour citizens of other countries who have, through their personal efforts, contributed towards the well-being of the people of South Africa and who thereby deserve the respect and recognition of the Republic of South Africa."

It is given to Dr Mahathir in recognition of "his exceptional and invaluable contribution to the promotion of friendly and mutually beneficial relations between the two countries."

The award comes two days after Dr Mahathir was given the honour to be the only non-African leader to deliver a special address on smart partnership during the first Southern Africa International Dialogue attended by 12 African leaders in Kasane, Botswana.

South Africa also paid tribute to Dr Mahathir who has been a long-standing supporter of the struggle for democracy by the people of South Africa and has made an important contribution to the struggle in the international arena.

"He was the first head of government to personally congratulate President Mandela on his election as President of South Africa in 1994, and has since that date tirelessly promoted close bonds of friendship between the peoples of South Africa and Malaysia," it said.

Dr Mahathir has also been "a consistent and strong advocate of closer involvement" by Malaysia's businesspeople in South Africa's economy.

"Largely due to his personal commitment and confidence in South Africa's future, Malaysia has in the short span of three years become South Africa's fourth largest investor and a major trading partner, providing employment opportunities and higher living standard to many South Africans," it said.

South Africa also commended Dr Mahathir for initiating and successfully implementing a programme of promoting equal opportunities and recognition in Malaysia's multi-ethnic society while maintaining economic growth.

"This today serves as an example to South Africa, which is engaged in a similar process," it added.

Today's award is the fourth international award received by Dr Mahathir since December last year.

On Dec 20 last year, he received the Jawaharlal Nehru award from the Indian government and on March 23, the King Faisal award for his contribution to Islam by the Saudi government.

On April 6, Dr Mahathir received the "Mubarak AlKabir" award from the Kuwaiti government for his role as a leader of a Muslim nation. -- BERNAMA

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