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Malaysia, Egypt sign agreements, MoUs

Sufi Yusoff

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Malaysia and Egypt today signed three agreements and two memoranda of understanding on trade and tourism, paving the way for expansion of bilateral ties and establishing each country as a gateway for investments in the respective regions.

The agreements are on the promotion of investment, avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion in respect to taxes on income, and the MoU, between the Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation and the Egyptian Promotion Centre.

Malaysia was represented by International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz while Egyptian Minister of Trade and Supply Dr Ahmed Gewili represented his country.

The agreements, otherwise known as the Investment Guarantee Agreement, will see greater economic and industrial co-operation between Malaysia and Egypt.

Another agreement involving air transport was signed between Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and Egyptian Minister of Electricity and Energy, Mohamad Maher Abaza.

The MoU on tourism co-operation, meanwhile, was signed by Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik and Egypt's Local Administration Minister Dr Mahmoud Sherif.

The documents were signed in conjunction with the two-day official visit of Egyptian Prime Minister Dr Kamal Ahmed El Ganzoury at the Prime Minister's Department today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Dr Kamal Ahmed witnessed the signings.

Speaking at a Press conference later, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the trade agreements marked a milestone in Malaysia-Egypt relations, which was otherwise limited to education, politics and culture.

"This is the first time both countries are embarking on a large-scale programme to collaborate in economic and development co-operation.

"Both countries have gone through a lot of development and the experiences gained could be used to create synergy for us to develop worthwhile projects which could benefit people of both countries," he said.

Abdullah said the signings would also pave the way for more Malaysian private sector investment in Egypt and vice-versa, as there was not much contact economically between the two countries.

"Naturally, the Government cannot do everything and we hope that this will be the catalyst for the private sector to venture into Egypt.

"It will also see the establishment of Egypt as a gateway for Malaysian investors in North Africa. We hope Egyptian investors will use Malaysia as a base for their exports to this region," he added.

Abdullah said in an earlier meeting between Dr Mahathir and Dr Kamal Ahmed, both leaders agreed on the signing of an umbrella agreement tomorrow.

The agreement would focus on co-operation in the fields of economy, science and technology, communication, transport, shipping and development of agro-based industries.

He said discussions would be held today to co-ordinate matters to be included in the umbrella agreement.

He added Dr Mahathir and his counterpart also discussed several other issues including the Arab-Israeli conflict where both parties shared common views, especially on the need for the Middle-East peace process to move forward.

Earlier, Dr Kamal Ahmed and his delegation, including five ministers, arrived at Parliament square about 9am for the official welcoming ceremony. He was greeted by Dr Mahathir.

He later inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by three officers and 104-men from the 1st Battalion Royal Malay Regiment led by Mej Hamdi Abdul Rahman accompanied by the Army's Central Armoured Regiment band.

Dr Mahathir then introduced his counterpart to Cabinet members before both left for the Prime Minister's Department.

After lunch, Dr Kamal Ahmed had an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar at the Istana Negara before attending a briefing by the Economic Planning Unit.

He later had tea at the Menara Kuala Lumpur and dinner hosted by Dr Mahathir at Sri Perdana.

The 56-member delegation, which also include 25 businessmen, will leave tomorrow.

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