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Abdullah-West Asia

MALAYSIA, EGYPT URGE NETANHAYU TO PUSH AHEAD WITH TALKS

KUALA LUMPUR, April 14 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Egypt today criticised Israel's leader, Benjamin Netanyahu for being belligerent and not keen to push ahead with the West Asia peace talks.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Egyptian counterpart, Dr Kamal Ahmed El Ganzoury both expressed dissatisfaction over the attitude of the Israeli leader towards peace in that region," Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He was briefing the press on the talks between Dr Mahathir and Dr Kamal at the Prime Minister's Department here.

According to Abdullah, both prime ministers had similar perception on the West Asia East issue and felt that the peace process there must move forward as it was very important for both the Palestinians and Israelis.

"Both are aware of the difficulties caused by Netanyahu who is belligerent and had not shown any keenness to push ahead with the peace process," Abdullah said.

He said besides the Arab-Israel relations, the two leaders also touched on other international issues like the need to continue cooperation under G15 and G8 (Group of Eight Islamic Developing Countries).

On enhancing trade and economic relations between the two countries, Abdullah said the initiatives taken towards this end were the signing of the Investment Guarantee Agreement, Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion in respect of Taxes on Income, the Air Transport Agreement, and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) on Trade Promotion and Tourism.

He said Egypt could play its part as a gateway to North Africa for Malaysian goods and both prime ministers felt that private sectors of both countries must play their roles by entering into joint ventures in efforts to improve cooperation in economic and trade fields.

"Both leaders also agreed that there should be umbrella agreements which will contain the various decisions made and understandings reached between Egypt and Malaysia to develop the various programmes concerning investments and joint ventures," he said.

Abdullah said the talks focussed on areas of cooperation such as air services, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture particularly agro-based industries, collaboration in cultivation of cotton and manufacturing of cotton-based products and alsopalm oil.

He said the two Prime Ministers agreed that the private sectors of both countries had a lot to follow up in learning more about each other as there had not been much contact, trade and investment made in the past.

This was the first high-level discussion Malaysia had ever had with Egypt, said Abdullah. -- BERNAMA

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