

27 SEP 1997

Mahathir-Medicine

MALAYSIA AND CUBA TO COOPERATE IN THE FIELD OF MEDICINE

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HAVANA, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is keen to embark on cooperation in the field of tropical medicine with Cuba, especially to benefit from research and development which is rather advanced in this Caribbean island nation.

This interest was expressed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who was impressed with the R & D activities at the Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology and the Pedro Kouri Institute of Tropical Medicine which he visited on Friday.

At the centre, Dr Mahathir was briefed on research to develop vaccines for various diseases. Among its successes recorded so far is a treatment for hepatitis B.

As a qualified medical doctor, the Prime Minister showed great interest in the centre's activities and requested its management to study the market for its drugs and medicines in the Southeast Asian region.

At present, the centre's products are only marketed in South America and several African countries.

Although Cuba is a poor country, it is free or almost free of diseases like malaria, dengue fever, diphtheria, tuberculosis and rubella.

In fact, by the year 2000 Cuba may become the first nation whose entire population of 12 million would have been vaccinated.

At the institute, set up in 1937, Dr Mahathir was briefed on how Cuba deals with the AIDS problem and to treat HIV carriers.

Since 1985, Cuba only recorded 1,700 HIV cases and of the number, only 600 deaths occurred due to full-blown AIDS.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a three-day official visit to Cuba, expressed his intention to send Malaysian medical personnel here to learn the various ways to curb diseases especially dengue which is a major problem in Malaysia.

This was welcomed by the Cuban authorities which were interested to extend the nation's discoveries to the outside world. -- BERNAMA

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