

09 APR 1997

Mahathir-Partnership

MALAYSIA AND PAKISTAN SHOULD DEVELOP PARTNERSHIP, SAYS MAHATHIR

By: Abdul Rahman Ahmad

ISLAMABAD, April 9 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia and Pakistan should develop a partnership by drawing upon each other's comparative advantage for mutual benefits.

The Malaysian Prime Minister said there are areas where Pakistan clearly has the experience or know-how which could be combined with the strength which Malaysia has developed over the years, to undertake joint-ventures on a bilateral basis or in concert with a third party.

"Both countries are well-placed to be the gateways for each other in their respective regions," he said at a state banquet hosted by Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Dr Mahathir arrived here from Bahrain for a one-day visit.

He was accompanied by a 50-member entourage which included Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Muatapa Mohamed, Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad and businessmen.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia could constitute the gateway for Pakistani products in the East Asia region while Pakistan could be the gateway for Malaysian manufactured goods in the sub-continent and the Commonwealth Independent States.

He said Malaysia-Pakistan joint venture would contribute towards bringing about a more desirable balance in the area of trade and payments between the two countries.

Dr Mahathir said Pakistan has become the largest importer of Malaysian palm oil and palm oil products.

Last year alone, Pakistan imported about 1.16 million tonnes or 84.9 percent of Malaysia's total exports to Pakistan.

Dr Mahathir hoped that Pakistan would not only continue to import palm oil from Malaysia, but that both countries could move ahead together to create value-added products from palm oil for exports to the emerging markets of the Central Asian Republics.

The Malaysian leader also said that here was much that both sides could still do to enhance technical cooperation, adding that since 1982, some 122 Pakistanis had participated in various training schemes under the Malaysian technical cooperation programmes.

Pakistan has also made its contribution in this regard by providing manpower for various sectors in Malaysia particularly in construction, manufacturing and plantations.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia still faces a shortage of medical officers and nurses and it will continue to welcome medical officers and specialists as well as nurses from Pakistan.

He also reiterated Malaysia's interest and readiness to participate in other sectors of development in Pakistan such as infrastructure development, housing and construction, finance and banking as well as electronics and computers.

He said today, nine Malaysian companies have invested in Pakistan in oil and gas exploration, port storage and bulking, installing telecommunications and tyre-related industry.

On the international scene, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia-Pakistan common membership of the United Nations, Organisation of Islamic Conference, Non-aligned Movement, the Commonwealth, among others, has enabled both countries to contribute towards bringing about peace and stability in many parts of the world, in particular Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia.

Dr Mahathir also said Malaysia welcomes Pakistan's participation in the sectoral dialogue relations with Asean in the fields of trade and investment, tourism, human resource development, prevention of trafficking of drugs, science and technology and environment.

He added Malaysia would support Pakistan's initiative in making this sectoral dialogue meaningful and substantive. --BERNAMA

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