

11 DEC 1998

Agong-Tanzania

DEVELOP COOPERATION INTO STRONG PARTNERSHIP, SAYS AGONG

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 11 (Bernama) -- The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar said tonight that the long-standing cooperation between Malaysia and Tanzania can be developed into a strong partnership.

Speaking at a state banquet in honour of visiting Tanzanian President Benjamin William Mkapa at Istana Negara, he said both countries could seek partnership in areas like science, trade, economy and sports.

"We trust that during this visit, new areas for collaboration will be explored and built upon," he said.

"Mwalimu Julius Nyerere had, from the beginning, shown interest, support and friendship for Malaysia. Mwalimu brought forth to Malaysia and other developing countries a paradigm for self-reliance, independence and for building a new nation founded on multi-culturalism."

Dr Nyerere was the first president of Tanzania and is now chairman of the South Commission.

Tuanku Ja'afar said Malaysia was committed to building on that foundation to foster closer ties with Tanzania.

Mkapa, accompanied by his wife Anna, arrived this morning for a three-day state visit.

He said bilateral relations between the two countries were no longer confined to infrequent high-level government-to-government contacts but had also included the private sectors.

He said Malaysia was pleased that the Tanzanian government had demonstrated a keen enthusiasm to have Malaysian companies participate in key infrastructure projects.

On Malaysia's economic problems, he said: "Although badly hit, the country has now put in place exchange rate controls which have enabled us to turn around."

Tuanku Ja'afar said these measures would protect Malaysia and its people from the damaging speculative activities of foreign predators until such time when the international community has put in place regulations to govern the movements of capital worldwide.

In his speech, Mkapa said his visit was a learning experience and would give Tanzania the opportunity to exchange views on a wide range of issues of mutual interest.

"At independence Malaysia and Tanzania had more or less the same per capita income, but today you are a lot richer whereas Tanzania is still one of the poorest countries in the world. We hope some of your magic can rub off on us," he said.

Mkapa said his meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today was very successful, and it has launched them into a new era of reinvigorated cooperation.

Mkapa said both countries had agreed some years back to establish a framework for cooperation in the economic, scientific, technical and cultural domains.

"We must also lay down the political foundation and create an enabling environment for the private sector to play its role as the engine for economic development."

Mkapa said although Malaysia was passing through a bad patch, he has no doubt that things would improve in the near future.

He said for many years Dr Mahathir has sounded warnings that there was a need for governments to have some measure of control over capital flows

in an increasingly globalising world.

"There were those who considered him a heretic. Not anymore. Thanks to the Asian financial crisis, the contention is gaining currency that some measure of government control is after all not a bad thing, and could have actually reduced the damage caused by the crisis," he said.

-- BERNAMA

NZ AR YBY