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KL and Cairo to sign two pacts during PM's visit

Fauziah Ismail in Cairo

CAIRO, Thurs: Malaysia and Cairo will sign two agreements, on science and technology and religious affairs and wakaf, during Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's official visit here beginning tomorrow, enhancing cooperation between the two countries.

The science and technology agreement will not only see Egyptian involvement in Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor but also Malaysian participation in Egypt's information technology programmes.

The agreement on religious affairs and wakaf will see the exchange of scholars and intellectuals between the two countries, Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad told Malaysian newsmen here today.

Malaysia and Egypt had, during Egyptian Prime Minister Dr Kamal Ahmed El-Ganzouri's visit to Malaysia in November last year, signed nine memorandums of understanding to enhance cooperation in electronics, furniture production, palm oil and high-technology industries.

This is Dr Mahathir's second visit to Egypt, which is at the invitation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and El-Ganzouri.

Dr Mahathir, who will be accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman and a 24-member business delegation, first visited Egypt in December 1994.

The visit is also in conjunction with the Group of 15 summit which begins here on Monday.

Besides a four-eyed meeting with Mubarak and attending a delegation meeting with El-Ganzouri, Dr Mahathir will also address Egyptian businessmen at a business forum organised by the Egyptian Federation of Chambers of Commerce and attend a dinner hosted by the Arab-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce.

He will also open Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua's (Perodua) showroom here. The Kancil is a hit in Egypt. Perodua's local Egyptian distributor sold the first consignment of 1,000 Kancils in the first week of their arrival last February. The second consignment of 120 units will arrive in the middle of the month and another 140 units will be shipped here at the end of the year.

Perodua is also looking into the feasibility of manufacturing the Kancil in Egypt in partnership with Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional (Proton) and Egyptian partners. The feasibility study is expected to be completed this month.

Perodua joins Sime Darby in putting a Malaysian presence in Egypt. Sime Darby Edible Oils Products has been operating in Alexandria since 1991, producing 60,000 tonnes of palm oil products a year through its two refineries which cost US\$40 million (US\$1 = RM3.84) each.

Total bilateral trade amounted to US\$290 million in 1996, with the balance favouring Malaysia by US\$220 million.

Abdul Kadir said Dr Mahathir will also receive a honorary doctorate in literature from the world's oldest university, University El-Azhar. It is understood that Dr Mahathir is the first foreign leader to be conferred a doctorate by the university in the last 30 years.

Dr Mahathir will also hold a dialogue with some 5,000 Malaysian students studying in various universities here.

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