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Mahathir-Egypt

MAHATHIR REVISITS EGYPT AFTER 14 YEARS

By: Azman Ujang

CAIRO, May 7 (Bernama) -- For six days from Friday, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be in Egypt, the ancient country famed for its pyramids and as a cradle of world civilisation, making a return visit after 14 years.

His trip this time is for two reasons: three days of official visit and to attend the Group of 15 (G-15) Summit of 16 developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The visit, his second as Prime Minister after his first in 1984, comes less than six months after President Hosni Mubarak made the first ever trip to Malaysia by an Egyptian president in November last year to attend the previous G-15 Summit in Kuala Lumpur.

Within the past year alone, Egyptian Prime Minister Dr Kamal Ahmed Al Ganzoury has been to Malaysia twice, one in April last year and then in November when he accompanied Mubarak for the Kuala Lumpur Summit.

"From 1984 to now, there have been major developments both in Malaysia and in Egypt. There has been a change in Egypt's perception towards East Asia, particularly Malaysia. Egypt would like to establish a new spirit of relationship with Malaysia in all fields," Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad said in a briefing to Malaysian reporters.

While the two prime ministers signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation during Dr Ganzoury's visit to Malaysia, they will ink another two pacts here, this time covering more specific matters.

One is the first ever agreement between the two countries on science and technology to kick off cooperation in Information Technology (IT), including Egypt's participation in Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) and Malaysia's involvement in Egyptian IT development.

The other is an MoU on religious and wakaf (endowment) affairs, mainly on the exchange of Islamic scholars and experiences in Islamic administration.

Dr Mahathir will among others be accompanied by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, a graduate of Egypt's renowned Al Azhar University here and who is basically Malaysia's Islamic Affairs Minister.

Al Azhar, the world's oldest university now over 1,000 years old and which has about 5,000 Malaysian students, will confer an Honorary Doctorate of Letters on Dr Mahathir at a ceremony on Sunday on Sunday.

The prime minister, who will also deliver a lecture at the university, is the first foreign head of government to be conferred the doctorate by the university in 30 years.

A 24-member business delegations will also accompany Dr Mahathir, who among other things, will also address a business forum organised by the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce.

Of special economic interest here lately has been the first shipment in February of 80 Perodua Kancils, the compact car produced by Malaysia's second national car project.

Kadir said all the 80 cars were sold within just one week, with another 120 coming later this month and 140 due by the year-end, proving that the mini car which has become ubiquitous on Malaysian roads is also a hit among Egyptians despite their bigger physique.

Dr Mahathir will also be taken on a night cruise along the Nile, the

world's longest river.  
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