

17/05/1998

Malaysia opposes all nuclear tests, says Dr M

Syed Nadzri in Khartoum, Sudan

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia is against the nuclear tests carried out by India earlier this week and he appealed to Pakistan not to react by doing the same.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Sudanese President Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir who said India's action could prove costly.

The two leaders stated their stand at a joint Press conference in Khartoum on Friday evening at the end of Dr Mahathir's three-day visit to Sudan.

They were asked to comment on the nuclear tests carried out by India and the growing international concern towards the possible repercussions.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had always been against such tests whether they were carried out by friends or foes.

He said the move by India could lead to an arms race in South Asia which would not benefit anyone.

"We appeal to India not to ever use its nuclear arms and also to Pakistan not to carry out similar tests," he said.

The Prime Minister said the world should also guarantee that no country needed nuclear weapons to defend itself.

Hassan said it would be sad if countries were engaged in an arms race when their efforts should be channelled towards providing welfare and economic development.

Dr Mahathir was also asked by a Sudanese journalist whether Malaysia was seriously affected by the economic and financial problems in East Asia.

The Prime Minister said there was still no sign it would be over soon.

He expressed hope that the international community would understand the seriousness of unregulated currency trading.

On Malaysia's role to resolve internal strife in southern Sudan, Dr Mahathir said factions engaged in the dispute should be willing to negotiate.

"We always believe that it is far better to have peace where both sides benefit because fighting only disrupts wealth.

"If we can be of any help, we are prepared to do so."

Dr Mahathir, who was making his first visit to Sudan, was also asked what he thought of the country.

He said he was quite surprised to see that Sudan was a peaceful country and that there was no widespread famine as reported in the media.

He also said Sudan had great potential for trade.

Earlier at a meeting with Malaysian businessmen and investors, the Prime Minister reminded them to do business ethically.

He said he did not want to hear horror stories about fly-by-night businessmen out to make a quick buck.

He cited a case where a Malaysian firm, after obtaining a contract to build a billion-dollar dam in a foreign country, sold it off to another party.

The Prime Minister also hit out at Malaysian firms which were quick to sign memorandums of understanding with foreign partners but were not serious about the project.

The 26-member Malaysian business delegation accompanying Dr Mahathir was led by Azman Shah Haron, chairman of Antara Holiday Villas Sdn Bhd, which is opening the Grand Holiday Villa hotel in Khartoum soon.

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