

31 JAN 2000

Syed Hamid-Cuba

FIDEL CASTRO INVITES MAHATHIR FOR G-77 SUMMIT IN HAVANA

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 31 (Bernama) -- Cuban President Fidel Castro has extended his personal invitation for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to attend the G-77 summit of developing countries in Havana from April 11 to 14.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the invitation was in recognition of Dr Mahathir's role as a strong advocate and supporter of South-South relations.

It was conveyed by the special representative of the Cuban president, Miguel Ramirez Ramos who called on Syed Hamid at Wisma Putra, here, today.

"He emphasised that it is a personal invitation of Fidel Castro as Dr Mahathir's presence will contribute effectively and meaningfully to this summit," Syed Hamid told reporters after the meeting.

He said the Havana gathering would discuss several key areas such as globalisation and its impact on developing economies, North-South relations and knowledge and technology.

He said given the unstoppable nature of globalisation which was having an impact on South-South nations, it would only be natural for the developing world to have its inputs to ensure that the process would not affect them adversely.

Syed Hamid said he was informed by Ramos that the summit was intended as a preparatory discussion to enable developing countries to play a more meaningful role when the United Nations convene its special assembly on the millennium in New York in September.

The minister also elaborated on his recent visits to West Asia which included Egypt and Algeria.

On the outcome of his visit to Cairo where he met key government figures including President Hosni Mubarak, Syed Hamid said it was agreed that the Malaysia-Egypt Joint Commission formed in 1977 would be reactivated.

He said this was in line with the wish of both sides to deepen bilateral relations particularly in trade, investment and tourism.

Syed Hamid said Egypt would also like Dr Mahathir to grace the G-15 summit of the more advanced developing countries in Cairo in June.

He said Malaysia definitely needed to put more focus on countries such as Egypt with its sizeable population and vast investment opportunities for Malaysians.

Discussions in Cairo also touched on humanitarian intervention and sovereignty of state with a new thinking among some quarters in the UN that the world body should be allowed to intervene in any country in the world whenever there were allegations of human rights abuses, he said.

"I think this type of development must not be used as an excuse to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. This matter must be given particular attention," Syed Hamid said.

The minister said on behalf of the Malaysian government, he invited Mubarak to pay an official visit to Malaysia.

Regarding his trip to Algeria, he said Malaysia would look at the possibility of opening up an embassy in Algiers.

Syed Hamid said Algerian ministers he met were also interested to learn more about Malaysia's development process including in fields such as infrastructure, banking and finances as well as privatisation.

"We'll be forming a joint commission with Algeria to enable us to have

regular meetings to monitor and follow up on some of the suggestions made," he added.

Syed Hamid also visited Oman.

-- BERNAMA

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