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Special invitation for PM from Cuba's Castro to G77 Havana summit in April

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Cuban president Fidel Castro has sent a special invitation to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to attend this year's Group of 77 developing nations summit meeting in Havana on April 11-14.

The invitation was submitted to Foreign Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar through Castro's special envoy Miguel Angel Ramirez Ramos at Wisma Putra this morning.

Syed Hamid told reporters later that Ramos' visit was "to invite our Prime Minister for the G77 summit, which is the first for this millenium".

The summit will discuss matters like globalisation and its impact on the South-South countries.

"As we know, globalisation is unstoppable and we must ensure during the summit to have input from developing countries so that globalisation will not be a disadvantage to South-South countries.

"The other major topic of discussion will be South-South co-operation and the special envoy stressed to me the importance of the presence of Dr Mahathir since he is a strong advocate of South-South co-operation," Syed Hamid said.

He added that North-South relations would be another topic for discussion.

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

On his recent visit to Oman, Egypt and Algeria, he said he met several key figures during his visit from Jan 21-29.

"I met President Hosni Mubarak and other top officials in Cairo and we decided to reactivate the Malaysia-Egypt Joint Commission formed in 1977.

"This was decided because both Malaysia and Egypt intend to strengthen bilateral relations particularly in trade, investment and tourism," said Syed Hamid.

He added that while in Cairo, he met Malaysian students to brief them on the latest developments in Malaysia.

"It is important to brief students abroad on major decisions made by the Government so that they do not have any misconceptions.

"I believe that other ministers should also try to have dialogues with students when they attend functions abroad," said Syed Hamid.

On his trip to Algeria, Syed Hamid said that Malaysia would look at the possibility of opening an embassy in Algiers.

"I met a few Algerian ministers and they are interested to know how Malaysia has developed over the years.

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