

11 MAY 2001

G-77-Cooperation

MALAYSIA AND CUBA AGREE TO ENHANCE ROLE OF G-77

PUTRAJAYA, May 11 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Cuba today agreed to play a role that can contribute towards making the Group of 77 a more respected grouping of developing countries.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Cuban President Fidel Castro, during their one-hour meeting, agreed that both countries needed to play such a role so that the voice of the third world in world affairs could be heard.

"This is especially pertaining to a fairer world, the economic and financial system as well as the trading countries," he told reporters after a delegation meeting between Malaysia and Cuba, led by Dr Mahathir and Castro, at the Prime Minister's Department, here.

Both Malaysia and Cuba are members of the G-77, an organisation that groups nearly 100 developing and third world countries. It was established by former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere in 1964.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia and Cuba also agreed that both countries should have more collaborations in the fields of research, agriculture, medical projects and tourism.

He said there was a lack of cohesiveness in getting all the developing countries together to put forward their views and as a result, the developing countries had always been marginalised.

"Dr Mahathir and Castro discussed the commissioning of a smaller group to act as a research centre so that it could help in getting the views of the south countries well articulated and well researched," he said, adding that this was decided at the South Summit hosted by Havana last year.

However, he said the formation of such a research centre had been hindered due to the the differing views among the G-77 members with one group preferring the current South Centre to be converted into a research centre and the other group wanting a smaller group to act as a research centre.

"In this, Dr Mahathir has said that we need a smaller group to act as a research centre and by this, the G-77 will have more ability to influence the world economic system," he said.

Syed Hamid Malaysia and Cuba also signed a bilateral agreement today on economic, technical and scientific agreement, a framework for cooperation between both countries.

"With that agreement and other agreements we have signed with Cuba, it shows that we are serious in wanting to work further than what we are currently doing," he said.

The agreement was signed immediately after the bilateral meeting between Dr Mahathir and Castro, followed by another delegation meeting between the two countries.

Malaysia was represented by Syed Hamid, while his Cuban counterpart, Felipe Perez Roque signed on behalf of the Cuban Government. It was witnessed by Dr Mahathir and Castro.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia had granted Cuba another US\$15 million palm oil credit scheme to buy palm oil from Malaysia after utilising the first US\$10 million under a similar scheme.

-- BERNAMA

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