

19/08/2001

Malaysia promises to help Yemen develop its economy

Farush Khan in Sana'a, Yemen

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad ended his four-day visit to Yemen yesterday with a promise to look into ways to strengthen bilateral co-operation in various fields.

He told a Press conference at the Presidential Palace that among the areas to be considered were oil and gas exploration and the textile industry.

The Prime Minister's decision was reflective of Malaysia's desire to help other countries develop successfully.

It is also seen as appropriate considering the respect that developing and even developed countries have for Malaysia.

Going by the questions posed by Yemeni journalists, it was obvious the country was looking forward to Malaysia's participation in joint ventures and helping it succeed in business and trade.

He was mainly asked about Malaysia's stand on globalisation and how it tackled the 1997 financial crisis without taking loans from the International Monetary Fund.

On trade, Dr Mahathir said during the visit Malaysian officials held talks with their Yemeni counterparts to identify areas of co-operation.

In the oil industry, they were looking at the possibility of setting up refineries.

"It is also possible that we will purchase products including cotton from Yemen," Dr Mahathir said.

He said Malaysia would also consider distributing its goods through the Port of Aden (which he visited on Thursday) to areas around Yemen and to East Africa.

He also told the Press conference that there was no reason Muslims and developing countries could not develop and prosper if they worked hard and maintained the spirit of brotherhood.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and newsmen, were taken on a tour of the Old City of Sana'a in the morning.

During his four-day stay in Yemen, Dr Mahathir also met President Ali Abdullah Saleh, Prime Minister Abdul Kader Ba Jammal and members of the Syura Council (which is equivalent to the Senate).

He also witnessed the signing of two memoranda of understanding on the establishment of a joint commission and on the training of civil servants.

On Friday, he met Malaysian students in Seiyun and Ta'arim in the province of Hadhramaut.

In all the meetings, the Yemenis demonstrated high regard for Dr Mahathir and Malaysia, which they considered as a symbol of success for Muslim countries.

In the town of Seiyun, hundreds of people gathered to catch a glimpse of the Malaysian delegation.

The visit to Hadhramaut was even mentioned to the congregation during the Friday sermon, something which is rarely done.