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Malaysia, Morocco to forge closer co-operation in commerce

PUTRAJAYA, Tues. - Malaysia and Morocco today agreed to rely on each other's strength and experience to forge closer co-operation in commerce and trade.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Moroccan counterpart Abderrahmane Youssoufi have agreed that both Kuala Lumpur and Rabat would serve as "gateways" for Malaysian and Moroccan products.

"Morocco has agreed to use Malaysia as a gateway (for its products) to Asian countries. Simialrly, Rabat has also invited us to use Morocco as a gateway to Europe.

"Such a measure will help strengthen investment ties between both countries," Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar told a Press briefing on the discussions between Dr Mahathir and Abderrahmane, who is on a four-day official visit to Malaysia.

Abderrahmane is accompanied by his wife, Helene, and a 36-member delegation including several ministers, senior government officials and six prominent Moroccan businessmen.

Syed Hamid said discussions also touched on sectors such as investment, services, airline industry, tourism and information communication technology (ICT).

"Morocco has requested that Petronas, which controls Energy Africa Ltd, be more active in oil and gas exploration in the country," he said.

"Malaysia is willing to provide various training programmes to Moroccan students under the Malaysia Technological Co-operation programme," he added.

"There is a positive outcome from Abderrahmane's visit. Malaysia and Morocco have acknowledged that visits by top leaders of both countries are important," he said, adding that Dr Mahathir would visit Morocco next year.

Syed Hamid added that Malaysia and Morocco also shared similar views on international issues, notably terrorism. "Both countries believe that the issue of terrorism can only be solved by looking at its causes and sources. The leaders also discussed the Palestine and Palestinian State issues."

Earlier, Dr Mahathir and Abderrahmane witnessed the signing of three memorandums of understanding at the Prime Minister's Office in Perdana Putra.

The three MoUs were:

- * the joint commission for economic, technical, scientific and cultural co-operation signed by Syed Hamid and the Moroccan Transport and Merchant Marine Minister Abdesslam Zuined;

- * the air service arrangement between Malaysia and Morocco signed by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and Abdesslam; and,

- * an agreement for co-operation in the field of ICT signed between the Multimedia Development Corporation and Moroccan Information TechnoPark Company. The signatories were MDC executive chairman Tan Sri Othman Yeop Abdullah and the State Secretary at the Moroccan PM's Department in charge of Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology Nasr Hajji.

Abderrahmane and wife were received upon their arrival in Putrajaya by Dr Mahathir and Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

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