

02 SEP 2003

Syed Hamid-Talks

KL, PRETORIA CONCUR ON NEED FOR DEVELOPING NATIONS TO BE UNITED

PUTRAJAYA, Sept 2 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and South Africa today expressed their shared belief that the only way developing nations can be counted on the international stage is for them to forge closer cooperation among themselves.

This is especially true with regard to matters pertaining to trade and globalisation whereby developing countries must ensure that any decisions by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) should not put them at a disadvantage.

This was among the issues discussed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and visiting South African President Thabo Mbeki at the Prime Minister's Department here.

"Both sides agreed that cooperation between countries of the South must bring result on the question of determining the new trading system," he told reporters after the talks.

At the end of the bilateral discussions, Kuala Lumpur and Pretoria reaffirmed their long-standing good relations by inking an agreement that would pave the way towards closer linkages in the fields of economy, science and technology and culture.

Syed Hamid said the two sides discussed the possibility of cooperating in the area of satellite communication.

He said South Africa was also keen to see more investments by Malaysian firms in that country. Malaysia is currently the third largest investor in South Africa.

"They seem to be satisfied with our investments now and we, on our part, are satisfied with their policies," Syed Hamid said.

He said Pretoria also acknowledged that it had learned a lot from Malaysia about economic matters and measures needed to restructure a society, especially in terms of providing more economic opportunities to the South African people.

"Hence they see us as a model for development and political stability," he said.

South Africa also thanked Malaysia for providing training to its people in the telecommunications and petroleum industries, he said.

Syed Hamid said both countries also concurred on the need for frequent flights between them and tasked their respective transport ministers to look into this.

"We have requested South Africa to establish air service to Malaysia. Malaysia Airlines and South African Airways could consider a code-sharing arrangement," he said.

Malaysia Airlines currently flies to South Africa but no airline from that country flies here.

Syed Hamid said Kuala Lumpur and Pretoria would also consider exchanging expertise on counter-terrorism.

Mbeki's three-day visit to Malaysia ends tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

MAM MAM YBY