

13 JUN 2003

Syed Hamid-Turkey

NEW TURKISH PM SEEKS CLOSER TIES WITH MALAYSIA

PUTRAJAYA, June 13 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Turkey are set to forge closer bilateral relations in wide-ranging areas as Ankara expressed its interest to learn from Malaysia's approach in moulding a successful economic model.

A meeting between the prime ministers of the two countries here today resulted in the expression of commitment to further deepen cooperation in areas such as politics, trade and investment, energy, water management and tourism.

Briefing reporters on the meeting between visiting Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Malaysian counterpart, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Erdogan also invited Malaysian firms to participate in Turkey's privatisation programme.

"Both leaders want the cooperation to be done in a meaningful way so as to establish a long-lasting relationship," he said, describing the meeting as warm and cordial.

Erdogan arrived this morning for a three-day trip to Malaysia, one of the first countries he is visiting after assuming power last March.

Syed Hamid said that as tourism had been identified as one of the key areas for cooperation, the relevant parties should create more tourism-related activities.

In this regard, he said that Malaysia had requested that Turkish Airlines resume flights to Kuala Lumpur after scrapping the service due to unfavourable economic condition.

"They have agreed to look at code-sharing arrangement between Turkish Airlines and Malaysia Airlines," he said.

In conjunction with the visit, Ankara and Kuala Lumpur inked a memorandum of understanding on bilateral cooperation in the energy and water sectors that would include sewage management and sanitation.

Witnessed by both Dr Mahathir and Erdogan, the pact was signed by Malaysia's Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and the Turkish Transportation Minister Binali Yildirim.

In addition, Syed Hamid said that Malaysia was also keen to market its palm oil in Turkey and had agreed to provide credit arrangement to interested Turkish companies.

Meanwhile, he said that both leaders shared similar views on international issues such as developments in West Asia and Iraq.

Dr Mahathir, he said, had invited Turkey to attend the Putrajaya Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit in October.

Syed Hamid also said that Erdogan requested Malaysia's assistance in bringing Turkey closer to Asean, a grouping of 10 South-East Asian countries.

Fielding questions from reporters later, Syed Hamid said that Erdogan informed Dr Mahathir that he would like to see the so-called road map for peace between Palestinians and Israel be successful.

The Turkish leader also mentioned that his foreign minister would be visiting Israel and Palestine arising from worrying concerns of the situation there, said Syed Hamid.

With respect to Iraq, he said, Turkey would like to see the territorial integrity of Iraq be respected and ultimately an Iraqi government representing the people be formed based on democratic practices.

"Because being a neighbour of Iraq, they consider peace and stability in that area as equally important to the well-being of Turkey itself," he said.

Queried on Dr Mahathir's view of the road map, Syed Hamid said that Malaysia had taken the view that if the Palestinians supported it, then Malaysia would give the initiative its backing.

"We have taken the view that we support the road map as a means of achieving peace even though it does not satisfy fully the wishes of the Palestinians, if it is a way of stopping violence and bringing both parties to the negotiating table," he added.

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