

14 JAN 2004

Senegal

MALAYSIA IS SENEGAL'S "REFERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT"- AMBASSADOR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 14 (Bernama)-- Senegal is using Malaysia as a reference for its own development, its Ambassador here Amadou Faye said today.

He told Bernama that Senegal had high respect and regards for Malaysia and considered it a model Islamic State.

As a mark of confidence in Malaysia, Senegal opened its first embassy in Asean in Kuala Lumpur in 2000.

"Two weeks after the opening our President, Mr Abdoulaye Wade, visited Malaysia officially," he said

"I have the honour to be the first Senegal Ambassador to Malaysia," he added.

Amadou said Malaysia had progressed tremendously particularly in the last two decades and Senegal and also all African countries could learn a lot from the Malaysian experience.

He said development was now a priority not only in his country but also in all of Africa.

"We have initiated what is known as a New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) where for the first time Africans are planning and implementing their own projects without interference from colonial masters.

In this Malaysia played an important role through the south-south cooperation initiated by the honourable Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister.

Amadou said, for example, many Islamic countries including his own would like to learn from Malaysia's management of its pilgrims to the Holy Land through the Pilgrims Management and Fund Board (Tabung Haji).

"We are really impressed with the way Tabung Haji provides services and training to pilgrims and Malaysian pilgrims are greatly respected for their discipline in Mecca during the Haj season," he said.

Senegal sends 7,000 to 8,000 pilgrims to Mecca annually.

Amadou said Senegal as the host of the next Islamic summit conference of the OIC in 2006 was keen to know how Malaysia organised and managed the last OIC summit in Putrajaya last October.

His country was also keen to implement other development projects and for this it had enlisted the services of the former Kuala Lumpur Mayor, Tan Sri Elyas Omar to advise the President and the Government of Senegal.

Tan Sri Elyas who was the Datuk Bandar from 1981 to 1992 has been appointed Special advisor to the President and Government of Senegal with effect from Jan 1.

-- BERNAMA

SAJ AZZ AAM