

05 AUG 2003

Vladimir-Mahathir

VLADIMIR: MAHATHIR CONTRIBUTED A LOT IN PROMOTING BILATERAL RELATIONS

PUTRAJAYA, Aug 5 (Bernama) -- Visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin said today that Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has contributed a lot in promoting bilateral relations and preserving good relations at the international level.

"The Prime Minister (Dr Mahathir) has given a great contribution at the international level. Since 20 years of the Prime Minister's leadership, he has done a lot to promote bilateral relations and preserving good relations," he said.

Because of Dr Mahathir, Malaysia has reached the modern age, Putin said in his speech when bestowing the "Orden Drusby" award, Russia's highest state award, to Dr Mahathir, at the Prime Minister's Office, here.

"Today, I have the honour of bestowing to the Prime Minister the highest state award of Russia, the Order of Friendship (which) is the sign of recognition to the Prime Minister on his efforts in strengthening bilateral and friendly relations between the two countries."

"I am awarding you this award and wish you and the whole Malaysia, prosperity and well-being," Putin said.

Putin said that the presentation of the award also signifies the respect of the Russian government for Dr Mahathir who has put no less effort in his fight for equal dissemination of benefits for the civilization of the world.

On being bestowed the award, Dr Mahathir said: "I consider the award as a great honour not only to me, but Malaysia itself."

The Prime Minister said that of late, ties between Russia and Malaysia has been enhanced and both nations have become to enjoy even more friendly relations.

"For Malaysia, we want to be friendly with all nations regardless of ideology and the countries' policies," he said.

He said that there was a time Malaysia could not agree with whatever Russia did because it found policies of Russia very much conflicting with

Malaysia's.

"We also look up to Russia to play a big role to ensure Russia becomes less fearful to small nations," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he also believed that Russia shares a belief in a multipolar world just like Malaysia.

On Putin's visit, Dr Mahathir said he considers it as a historical event as there has never been any Russian leader visiting Malaysia before.

"It also marks an important step towards greater cooperation," he said.

The Prime Minister said that after the visit, he believed the relations between the two countries would even be better, including economic interaction and it would be beneficial to both countries.

"I value this award because it signifies the relationship and future growth of friendship between Malaysia and Russia," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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