

PM: Sanctions hurt small nations

Restrictions by world superpowers deprive us the freedom to do trading

PHNOM PENH: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad slammed several world superpowers for imposing sanctions on small countries in the region.

He said the sanction would hurt not only the country involved but also other countries for 'no reason at all'.

"We have no quarrel with this country, but we are stopped from doing any business with this country because of the sanction. This is grossly unfair.

"As a small country, we cannot apply sanctions on anybody, but it is the big powers who apply the sanction and therefore it deprives the small countries' freedom.

"Despite the fact that they keep on talking about human rights and freedom, they take away our freedom to trade with our own trading partners," he said at a joint press conference with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen at the Prime Minister's Office in the Peace Palace here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the issue would be brought up at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) which will be held from Sept 17 to 30.

"It is a good platform for us to raise the issue," he said.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir, who is on a three-day official visit to Cambodia starting on Monday, held a bilateral meeting with Hun Sen.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia and Cambodia had agreed that seas in the region should be free for navigation with no restriction.

"It will hamper the development of countries bordering the seas," he said.



Warm welcome: Dr Mahathir and wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah (left) are formally welcomed by Hun Sen and wife Bun Rany at the Peace Palace in Phnom Penh. — Bernama

On Timor Leste joining Asean, Dr Mahathir said: "We will try to ensure Timor Leste becomes a member in the next Asean meeting.

"Timor Leste has been applying to join Asean for a long time and it should become a member of Asean."

Meanwhile, Hun Sen said Malaysia and Cambodia are com-

mitted to pushing for a conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement within this year because it is vital for regional economic integration and growth.

"We acknowledge the need to promote training and information-sharing in the fields of security and national defence and welcome the discussion between the two

defence ministries on promoting cooperation.

"We encourage relevant institutions of both countries to accelerate the conclusion of the memorandum-of-understanding on cooperation in combating trafficking in persons," he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir and Hun Sen witnessed the signing of the Double Taxation Avoidance

Agreement (DTA) and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the Field of Tourism.

The agreement and MoU were signed by Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah and Cambodian Economic and Finance Minister Aun Pornmoniroth and Cambodian Tourism Minister Dr Thong Khon.

Malaysia-Cambodia trade last year stood at US\$558mil (RM2.35bil) while during the first six months of this year, the value reached US\$422.6mil (RM1.78bil), an increase of 39.2% compared to the corresponding period last year.

At present, there are about 400 Malaysian companies operating in the country, including in banking, hospitality, telecommunication and petroleum.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir received a red carpet welcome at the Peace Palace.

Hun Sen and wife Bun Rany greeted Dr Mahathir and his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali upon arrival at the palace at 9am local time (10am Malaysian time) before the national anthems of Malaysia and Cambodia were played.

Dr Mahathir inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by the Cambodian Armed Forces.

Despite the rain, hundreds of students and locals lined-up at the entrance of Peace Palace to welcome Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah. — Bernama

Watch the video
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