

Dr Mahathir thanks Saudi Arabia for cordial treatment for Malaysian pilgrims

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PUTRAJAYA, Oct 26 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has thanked the Saudi Arabian government for the cordial treatment for Malaysian pilgrims when performing the haj in that country.

"We thank them for the treatment accorded by the Saudi Arabian government to our pilgrims when performing the haj all this while and at times they were given special treatment.

"In general, the Saudi Arabian government is a good host and we have no problems with them,"he told the media at his office in Putrajaya today.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir received a courtesy call from the Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Ahmed Al-Jubeir at the Perdana Putra building.

The two held an approximately thirty-minute discussion in conjunction with Adel's three-day visit to Malaysia beginning last Wednesday.

The Prime Minister said the Saudi minister also appreciated and praised the attitude of Malaysian pilgrims who had performed the rituals for the fifth pillar of Islam in a very proper manner.

"Malaysia's advantage is because we went there via the Pilgrimage Fund Board (Tabung Haji) which managed haj rituals for the Malaysian pilgrims,"he said.

On the quota for the pilgrimage, Dr Mahathir also told Adel about the large number of Tabung Haji contributors in this country.

"As such, no matter how big the quota is, not everyone can go and there are some who are too old and may not be able to perform the haj, so we give priority to such groups,"he added.

He said Adel had accepted his explanation.

"I did not ask for an increase in the quota, but I explained that many people want to perform the pilgrimage but their age may have exceeded the ideal level and they may not be able to go,"he said.

Malaysia's official quota for the pilgrimage this year remains at 30,200 people like last year.

The Prime Minister also said that any issue regarding the two countries had been discussed and resolved between Adel and his Malaysian counterpart, Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah at Wisma Putra.

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