

Malaysian Foreign Minister Hamid:

ASEAN Can Play a Lead Role In Seeing Birth of East Asian Economic Congress

Question: Mr. Syed Hamid Bin S. Jaafar Albar, Malaysian minister of Foreign Affairs, what is the purpose of your visit to Korea?

Answer: The purpose of my visit was first to fulfill the invitation of President Kim Dae-jung extended to Prime Minister Mahathir. The second is that the bilateral relation between Korea and Malaysia is very strong the visit would serve the purpose of further deepening and strengthening relationship between our two countries.

It is important other than having an economic trade or investment relationship for us to keep the momentum of our political relationship. I think the object of the visit has been achieved and the leaders have been able to discuss at great length various issues that affects financial, regional and as well as international relations.

Q: What is the result of the visit?

A: I think, the visit results has been very productive and there were lot of discussion which can be followed up. So I believe that there is a great desire for both countries to learn from the experience of each other. We want to learn from Korea, Korea's experience so that we can apply to Malaysia where it is applicable.

It is important that Korea is one of the model for "Look East" policy, as mentioned by our Prime Minister. So this we have not given up, under the "Look East" policy, over 1,000 students and trainees from Malaysia are in Korea. We would like to continue to send our people to Korea, so that they will learn something like culture and see what made the Korea click.

At the same time, we are also happy to see Korean students going for studies in Malaysia and we would also like to see increase in Korean investments in Malaysia other than trade.

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Q: What are the problems you are facing in Malaysia today?

A: Generally, there is no problem: our economy is back on recovery and the U.S. economy will recover along with the other parts of the world. Korea is doing very well and we are very happy to see Korea doing very well. We believe that we are going in the right direction to see further growth in our economy. In the first quarter, it has shown positive growth and I am sure our target of 3.5% growth by the year-end will be achieved this year.

Q: What is your impression about your Prime Minister Mahathir?

A: The Prime Minister is a very hardworking, very disciplined and has got a very clear mind. Thus, he is able to have a vision for our country. He has been successful in evolving the creation of a Malaysian identity and I think the fact that we are able to have political stability and very good economic policies that is what make us feel confident about ourself.

And he is recognized by other countries and other world leaders, he has been a positive contributor in the world of Islam, and in other international issues. So, I think Malaysia should be very proud to have the Prime Minister who is nationally and as well as internationally recognized as statesman.

Q: What is the new role of ASEAN in the future?

A: ASEAN has to meet the new challenges of the 21st Century. After the September 11th, there are new dictates: ASEAN has to continue to be relevant and I think we have to grow into not only more collaborated cooperative spirit, there should be more cohesive unity spirit in others and we must be complimenting each other. Because ASEAN with 5,000 million population has got a lot to contribute, it is an economic force, so in this context ASEAN could play a very leading and very useful role in seeing birth of East Asia economic congress.

I think, the ASEAN+Three is moving in that direction even though we have not called it as East Asia economic congress, but we must focus on other than political, on strong cooperation in the economic field. We should be complimenting each other, we should promote to the outside world as one united cohesive institution.

Q: What is the prospect of new role of ASEM (Asia European Summit Meeting)?

A: ASEM is intended to establish a forum for



Minister Syed Hamid Bin S. Jaafar Albar

dialogue between two cultures: one is Asian and the other one is European. I think this is a good dialogue forum for us not to be imposing on each other our own views, but to see in what areas we can find out common factors and work together towards the betterment of the world.

I think, in this particular case, the European countries are mostly the countries of the EU, where the economy is very strong, they are fully developed and in countries in Asia with different level of phases of development. So there is lot of complementality and contribution that can be done for the progress and betterment of the new world order, especially as we move towards globalization. So I think every one agrees that the globalization is necessary, but the process must also take into account concern and worries of the developing world.

Q: What is the new role of the United Nations in 21st Century?

A: The United Nations must continue to have its credibility and its integrity must be protected all the time because I think we are going to face new challenges and different crises from the world before. The authority of the UN must be respected. It is very sad if you see that the authority of United Nations undermined or its attendance toward unilateralism. This is not good, because I think, we all have to respect the rules of the big powers. There must be a body that represents every one.

The problem is in the case of Malaysia. We feel that the United Nations is a product of the II World War. Now, we are in the 21st Century. Therefore, there is a need for revising the role, functions, the restructuring of the United Nations in short. Even in the question of "Veto," the question of permanent member, because the world has changed so much, we think that there is a need to look at restructure of the United Nations.

Q: How did you meet your wife?

A: I did not meet my wife. My marriage was arranged by my family. When I was doing my final major in law at my old school, my family thought. It was about time to get somebody who could become a partner for me. So they introduced us to each other, we both agreed and then we both of us decided to get married.

Q: What is your hobby?

A: My hobby is reading. ★