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Mahathir - Malay

From Abdul Rahman Sulaiman

SANTIAGO, June 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad declared today that the first man who circumnavigated the world was a Malay known as Henry the Black. *oversee maps.*

He was one of the crew members of the famous Spanish navigator, Ferdinand Magellan who reached the Far East by way of South America in 1521.

The Prime Minister related this anecdote when he spoke to a group of Chilean businessmen to trace the beginning of contacts between Malaysia and the South American region.

+As you are aware, the first contact between the region and Malaysia was made a long time ago in the 16th century when the famous navigator, Ferdinand Magellan reached the Far East by way of South America in 1521,+ he said.

+A little known fact about Magellan's epic voyage was that one crew member, Henry the Black, was a Malay from the Philippines who was taken to Spain by Spanish colonisers earlier,+ he added.

According to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, Ferdinand Magellan whose Portuguese name was Fernao de Magalhaes, a Portuguese citizen who served under Alfonso de Albuquerque in Malacca.

He said as Magellan died in the Philippines, the man who first circumnavigated the world was actually Henry the Black.

+Juan Sebastian Del Cano, who took over after Magellan died must be the second man to circumnavigate the world,+ he stressed. -- more

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The Prime Minister said later on in the late 19th century, rubber trees from this region were introduced to Malaysia and since then Malaysia had been well known throughout the world for its rubber exports in terms of quality, quantity and the technology that it had developed in the production and application of natural rubber.

He said it was fortunate that although the region and Malaysia were separated by the huge Pacific Ocean, with major advances and achievements in the field of transportation and communication, the physical distance had been considerably reduced.

Consequently he said, today it was easier for people of the two countries to visit and communicate with one another.

He called on Chilean and Malaysian businessmen to seize this opportunity and establish more contacts between them.

To the Chilean industrialists, the Prime Minister offered Malaysia to be used as a depot and base for the rapid and efficient distribution of their exports to Southeast and West Asian region.

This was particularly so as direct shipments from Chile to the various countries in the region would be costly and infrequent due to shipping constraints.

The Prime Minister told the businessmen that Malaysia also welcomed regional headquarters and offered incentives to them.

+Company executives enjoy a good life in Malaysia because of good communication, low cost of living and the availability of food and goods from every corner of the globe,+ he said.

+Our annual inflation rate of between two and four per cent and most luxury items enjoy tax-free status,+ he explained_ -- Bernama

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