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MAHATHIR VISITS ST LUCIA

Mahathir-Caribbean

From Donald Baptist

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② W. p overseas

CASTRIES (St Lucia), Dec 2, (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here Sunday for a three day visit aimed at further strengthening friendly ties with island nations in the Caribbean.

While here, he will also take the opportunity to study the economies of the island nations in detail and look at tourism activities which might be useful to the Malaysian tourism industry.

He is scheduled to hold talks with the St Lucian Prime Minister, Encik John Compton and other government leaders and address the private sector here at a lunch tomorrow.

Accompanied by Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, he was greeted by Encik Compton at Vigie Airport on arrival in a charter aircraft from Martinique where he took a one-day break after attending the Group of 15 developing countries second summit in the Venezuelan capital, Caracas, from Nov 27-29.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir told Malaysian journalists covering the visit that although the Caribbean island nations might not hold out much potential for trade opportunities, Malaysia should not only look at trade prospects in its relations with other countries.-- more

▼02/12/10-29MST

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Mahathir-Caribbean 2 Castries (St Lucia)

+We should be good with these nations **and may he help them or when we want.** friends, we will have friends,+ he said.

He said that Malaysia's contacts with the Caribbean island states **in the past, had been minimal** if non-existent except **for meetings with its leaders** at international meetings or **at the Commonwealth** conferences.

+As much as they **have** to learn about us, **we have to learn about** them,+ he added, saying it would **be useful** to get know the Caribbean island nations **and to have them as friends.**

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also said **that** the islands **had a well-developed** tourism industry, much older **than** that of Malaysia **and it, was obvious** that they had benefited from their location.

They **have** been able to develop hotels that were not only of **medium** cost but also attractive to tourists and Malaysia which **was very much** like this part of the world could learn from their success, **he added.-- more**

▼02/12/10-34MST

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Corrected Repetition
Mahathir-Caribbean 3 Castries (St. Lucia)

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said also there were no immediate plans to promote tourism **from Malaysia** to the **Caribbean**, **it may be a long term objective.**

'We are trying to develop the tourist trade with Mexico and Latin America and, one day when we are flying to Latin America, it would not be **so far** to come to this part, **of the world**,+ he added.'

He said one day investors from Malaysia might also participate in tourism projects in the Caribbean but for 'the moment the area was too far and, furthermore, there were ample opportunities in Malaysia and other countries.

There were also possibilities of studying the methods used in the tourism industry in this region as it depended very much on tourism. On the other hand, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he had been told that the island nations **were very keen on going** into aqua-culture and Malaysia could offer its expertise in this field if they were interested to obtain help.-- **more**

▼02/12/11-08MST

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Mahathir-Caribbean 4 Castries (St Lucia)

Other areas in which Malaysia could offer assistance were in the fields of administration and financial matters, he added.

As far as trade was concerned, he said the Caribbean as 'a whole had a sizeable population but Malaysia would have to study the market to see if Malaysian made goods could be sold in the region.

St. Lucia, the second largest of the Windward Islands, lies halfway between Martinique and St Vincent. Just 43 km wide, it is slightly larger than Singapore island.

Discovered by Christopher Columbus **in 1502** during his fourth and final voyage to the West Indies in 1502, the island changed hands between France and Britain **no fewer than 14 times.**

Ceded to Britain by France in the Treaty of Paris in 1814, St. Lucia was granted self-government in 1967 and attained independence in February 1979.

A member of the Commonwealth, its economy is made up of agriculture - with the chief crops being banana, coconut, cocoa and citrus fruits - tourism and manufacturing.

Its major exports are banana, accounting for about **80 per cent**, coconut products, mace, nutmeg **and** citrus fruits. -- Bernama

▼02/12/11-10MST