

CNS1568

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REPEAT aac

MAHATHIR SAYS DISTANCE NOT BARRIER TO CLOSER COOPERATION

Mahathir-trade

From Donald Baptist,

CASTRIES (ST LUCIA), Dec 3 (Bernama) -- Distance should not be allowed to stand in the way of development of two-way trade and communication between the island nations of the Caribbean and Malaysia for their mutual benefit, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here Monday.

He added that Malaysia was looking forward to having closer relations with St Lucia and other Caribbean island states, leading to greater exchange and an increase in two-way trade and communication.

+We are not only looking at only selling but we also want to see what we can buy from this region, + he told a group of 50 businessmen during a lunch hosted by the St Lucian private sector.

He hoped more people from St Lucia would visit Malaysia to learn about how things are done and train in Malaysian institutions while Malaysia could learn St Lucia's expertise in banana cultivation and tourism.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who arrived here Sunday for a three-day visit, said Malaysia has had a policy over the last 10 years of making friends not only with the powerful countries but with everyone.-- more

♥03/12/11-46MST

CNS1525

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Mahathir-trade 2 Castries (St Lucia)

+Friends, you never know when they can come in handy. Whether, they do come in handy or not, I think it is a good thing to be friends, + he added.

He said that in its policy of friendship with all, Malaysia was developing South-South co-operation and making every effort to establish closer relations with the South countries.

He added: +We are going now to Latin America, a place that is very far from us but because we made a deliberate effort to come close, we feel close to them.

+They benefit from the trade and we benefit from the trade also.+

He said, similarly, St Lucia was not very far from Malaysia as it took only slightly more than 24 hours flying time and this was going to get shorter in the future.

+It is worth making this effort and disregarding distance, + he added.-- more

♥03/12/10-16MST

CNS1526

U GE 03-12 00180 EA805

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Mahathir-trade 3 Castries (St Lucia)

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had traditional trading partners like Europe, North America and Japan but it wanted to be less dependent on developed countries only and the developing countries could provide opportunities too.

He added that a lot of countries in the north had benefited from trading and investing in the south and there was no "reason why countries in the south should not do the same and benefit as well.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had been an agricultural country at one time with its main exports being tin and rubber and later palm oil and cocoa.

But the terms of trade kept on changing to Malaysia's disadvantage and it had to sell more and more rubber in order to buy less and less manufactured goods.

He added: "So, it follows that if we manufacture, we will be able to take advantage of increases in the price of manufactured goods. Therefore, we decided to go into manufacturing." -- more

▼03/12/10-19MST

CNS1527

U GE 03-12 00267 EA806

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Mahathir-trade 4 (last) Castries (St Lucia)

Since Malaysia did not have the technology, foreigners with the technology, know-how and capital were invited to start their industries in Malaysia and in 1990 alone their total investments amounted to US\$15 billion (M\$40.5 billion)

"So, by opening and not closing your country, you can really benefit," he said.

He added, however, that it took time and patience and now Malaysia was a little more sophisticated in the manufacturing sector, producing telephones, computers and other electronic products.

He was sure that what had been achieved by Malaysia could be achieved by St Lucia and the other island states in the Caribbean.

Also present at the lunch, jointly organised by the St Lucia Chamber of Commerce, National Development Corporation and Small Industrial Business Association, was the Prime Minister of Grenada, **Encik Nicholas Braithwaite**.

On Monday morning, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir started the second day of his visit by calling on the acting Governor-General Encik Francis James.

Accompanied by Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, he then called on Prime Minister John Compton before holding bilateral discussions, lasting about one hour.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was then taken on a tour of the Rodney Bay Marina Development project -- a private yacht club and villa complex offering boat mooring facilities and services.

On Monday night, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir and Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah were guests of honour at a reception hosted by the acting Governor-General at Government House. -- Rernama

▼03/12/10-26MST