

Vietnam offers us FTZ to open factories

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Malaysian companies will form a consortium and set up factories in a proposed free trade zone (FTZ) in Vietnam producing items for export, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the Vietnamese Government has offered Malaysia a free trade zone for its businessmen to set up factories there.

"They have shown us some areas where we could manufacture goods for export and we will now form a consortium which could participate in industrial growth in Vietnam," he said on arrival at the Kuala Lumpur international airport in Subang.

Dr Mahathir, who returned after a five-day official visit to Vietnam, described his mission as very successful and added that several agreements on economic co-operation were signed.

More than 20 agreements involving joint-venture projects were also signed between businessmen from the two countries.

"The situation in Vietnam today is very much different from before with small and big businesses mushrooming in the country.

"Previously, individual businesses were disallowed but the situation has changed and people are encouraged to participate in the economic recovery of the country," he said.

He said the people in Vietnam were now actively participating in the economy and were establishing various types of businesses.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysian businessmen who accompanied him had identified several items that could be exported to Vietnam.

He described his visit as "very successful" compared with his previous trade missions elsewhere.

The Prime Minister said besides enhancing economic co-operation, the two countries had decided to strengthen its political relations.

He said the Vietnamese Government was prepared to accept its refugees now residing in Malaysia.

"But the Vietnamese Government will only accept those who want to return voluntarily as the situation in Vietnam has improved considerably," he said.

On claims to territorial waters, Dr Mahathir said the two countries would continue to have discussions to arrive at an amicable solution.