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Mahathir-Austria

AUSTRIA CAN CONTRIBUTE TO MALAYSIA'S INDUSTRIALISATION GOAL

KUALA LUMPUR, July 30 (Bernama) -- Austria, given its leadership in certain areas of technology, can provide vital inputs towards Malaysia's industrialisation goals, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

"Malaysia is currently entering a phase that emphasises capital-intensive and high-technology industries and it is of particular interest to the Malaysian Government that Austrians avail themselves of the opportunities in this area," he said at an official dinner for Austrian Chancellor Dr Franz Vranitzky at Sri Perdana, here.

He said Austria was also welcome to participate in infrastructure projects in the buoyant Malaysian and Southeast Asian growth area.

On the dramatic geopolitical developments in central and eastern Europe, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia appreciated the leading role that Austria had played in extending assistance to those countries making a transition to the market economy system.

"Clearly, Austria's quiet efforts to ensure political stability and a smooth economic transformation have contributed to the steady progress and development of these countries," he said.

Dr Mahathir also complimented Austria for its integration in the world economic system which he said had progressed well and indirectly benefited Malaysia.

"For instance, our two-way trade figure reached US\$500 million in 1994, of which a significant portion constitutes transit trade to countries in central and eastern Europe," he said.

He said Austria, which had emerged as a natural springboard to the emerging markets of central and eastern Europe, should use Malaysia's strategic geographical advantages to complement its economic objectives in this part of the world.

Austria's experience in regional cooperation through the Danube could be a relevant model for Asean's Mekong basin plan since both the Danube and the Mekong were significant waterways of the respective regions.

Dr Mahathir also hoped that Austria could help in assisting Bosnia-Herzegovina in its reconstruction efforts.

"I trust that what Malaysia could do from afar, Austria could do better because of her geographical proximity," he added.

Dr Franz and his 25-member delegation comprising senior ministers, government officials and businessmen arrived here today for a four-day official visit, his first to Malaysia.

Dr Vranitzky, in his speech, said he was looking forward to the upcoming Asia-Europe meetings which had made a promising start in Bangkok earlier this year.

He said this would open the way not only for a better understanding between Asia and Europe but would also lead to a concrete and substantial joint action to address the many challenges facing the societies.

Peace, democracy and the natural environment would be preserved not through blind competition but through close cooperation, sharing of responsibilities and mutual respect, he added.

He was certain that many international views that he shared with Dr Mahathir would lead to close cooperation within the dynamically expanding dialogue between the South Asian countries and the European Union.

Dr Vranitzky said he shared the prime minister's concern that there

were still setbacks in efforts to establish a true and lasting peace in the former Yugoslavia.

He said both countries had made impressive efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the civilian population who were innocent victims of the conflict.

The tragic events in Bosnia had once again highlighted the importance to strengthen and improve the capabilities of the United Nations to establish peace and safeguard human rights worldwide.

He said Austria was convinced that the reform process already underway would receive particular impetus and gain momentum under the Malaysian chairmanship during the coming 51st General Assembly of the United Nations.

He also said his visit would further strengthen the bonds of friendship between Austria and Malaysia.

He was confident that the highly positive trend in bilateral trade, as evidenced by the statistics for 1994 and 1995 would continue for mutual benefit.

-- BERNAMA

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