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Canada-Asia
CANADA TO BE MORE ENGAGED IN ASIA

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 19 (Bernama) -- Canada, long considered more of a European and North American state, wants to be more involved in Asia.

"We have fixed our eyes for too long a time on the other side of the Atlantic and on the South of our borders," Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien said at the opening of the First Canada-Malaysia business forum here today.

Chretien said: "Those days are over for good. We have lifted our gaze also to the Pacific. We have finally recognised Canada is a Pacific nation."

He said also that his country did not have the baggage of having an imperial past and Canada had been working in partnership since the earliest days of its independence to help build modern Asia within Malaysia and throughout the region.

Chretien, who arrived yesterday for a two-day official visit at the invitation of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said Canada wanted to expand its partnership in sustainable development, in business, human resources and technology to assist Malaysia in reaching its aim of being a developed nation by the year 2020.

He said trade between the two countries had been growing at an "incredible" rate of 30 per cent per year in recent years, adding that for last year two-way trade was expected to surpass RM3.7 billion (C\$2 billion).

Two-way trade hit RM1.85 billion (C\$1 billion) for the first time in 1993 and that figure increased to RM2.8 billion (C\$1.5 billion) in 1994.

The one-day business forum was attended by about 500 business and corporate leaders from both countries. Chretien's delegation included a group of about 200 business leaders. -- Bernama