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Czech-Visit

CZECH PM TO MAKE FIRST VISIT TO MALAYSIA

By: E.Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 (Bernama) -- Czech Republic Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus will make an official visit to Malaysia for the first time from Sept 8 to 10 to enhance bilateral ties and strengthen trade and economic cooperation.

The visit is at the invitation of his Malaysian counterpart, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Foreign Ministry said today.

Klaus will be accompanied by his wife, Livia Klausova, and a delegation that will include Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Office, Jiri Weigl, and acting Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Pavel Dvorak, senior government officials and several private sector representatives.

The Czech leader will hold talks with Dr Mahathir and sign a bilateral agreement on the promotion and protection of investment while here, Wisma Putra said in a statement.

Klaus will be granted an audience by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar and he is also to deliver a keynote address at a business luncheon hosted by the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Meanwhile, Czech Republic Charge d'Affaires Ivan Hotek said being a new state on the map of Europe from Jan 1, 1993, as one of the two successor states to the peacefully divided Czechoslovakia, Czech Republic is now trying to tap the potentials of the Asian market.

Described as one of Eastern Europe's most durable post-Communist leader, Klaus is now seeking to translate into gains his free-market reforms outside the republic.

And this is what the 54-year-old silver-haired conservative economist is planning to do during his visit to Malaysia after successfully steering his country into capitalism.

Hotek told Bernama in an interview today that tourism had proven to be a potential industry for his country and the large number of foreign visitors had prompted the development of a range of services linked directly and indirectly to tourism, industry and construction.

"Since the Velvet Revolution in Nov, 1989, the Czech Republic's incoming and outgoing tourism has been growing at a faster rate than world average," he said.

He said that in 1994 and 1995 more than 100 million foreign visitors arrived in the republic yearly, up 480 per cent since 1989.

Tourism was one of the fields that had benefited from privatisation and also broadened the services of travel agencies and other organisations resulting in an influx of foreign capital, including from Malaysia.

Among the Czech-Malaysia cooperation to promote tourism was between Czech's largest tour agency, Cedok, and a local company, Global Holidays Sdn Bhd. -- BERNAMA

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