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DR MAHATHIR TO ADDRESS BUSINESS LUNCHEON IN ZAGREB TOMORROW

By: Salbiah Said

ZAGREB, April 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will address a business luncheon here tomorrow, which is expected to draw about 250 participants comprising top Croatian businessmen and officials from the various ministries in Croatia.

Dr Mahathir will also entertain questions from the floor at the luncheon organised by the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) in conjunction with the prime minister's official one-day visit to Croatia.

He is accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

This will be followed by the signing of several memoranda of understanding and a joint venture agreement between Malaysian companies and their Croatian counterparts.

Others in the official delegation include International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Dr Leo Michael Toyad, Foreign Affairs Ministry Secretary-General Tan Sri Ahmad Kamil Jaafar and Economic Planning Unit Director-General Tan Sri Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman.

A business delegation comprising 14 captains of the Malaysian industry headed by Hicom Bhd chairman Datuk Seri Yahaya Ahmad is also here.

At the five-day Malaysian Products Exhibition at the Zagreb fair yesterday, visitors thronged the Malaysian pavillion to catch a glimpse of Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Bhd's Proton Wira 400 series for the Croatian market. Two variants of the Proton Wira range are on display.

Meanwhile, Matrade officials led by Chief Executive Haji Samsuddin Marsop have been working almost round-the-clock from Day One to ensure everything goes according to schedule.

Malaysian exhibitors at the Zagreb fair started displaying their products at their booths from Monday.

Croatian prime minister Zlatko Matesa, who graced the Zagreb fair on Monday, was also introduced by Samsuddin to some of the Malaysian representatives at Pavilion 9.

At the five-star Inter-Continental Hotel, Matrade together with Tourism Malaysia are organising a Malaysian Food Festival and Cultural Presentation which ends on April 20. The food festival features Malaysian delicacies that have made Malaysia famous as a culinary centre in Asia.

A Malaysian dance troupe, Briged Karya Melaka, is entertaining diners nightly.

Meanwhile, executives from 28 companies taking part in the Malaysian Products Exhibition have been busy entertaining queries from visitors at their booths since early morning. Among those taking part are Edaran Otomobil Nasional Bhd (EON), Sapura Holdings Bhd, Sime Darby Bhd and Berjaya Group Bhd.

At the Matrade secretariat, the list of companies signing the MOUs may see some changes on the final day. Initially, six MOUs and a joint venture agreement have been scheduled.

One MOU, originally scheduled for signing between Kumpulan Pinang Ussahassama-Imbas Sdn Bhd, Siemens Electrical Engineering Sdn Bhd and Koncar Power Transformers Ltd for the purchase of power transformers for Tenaga Nasional Bhd, has not been finalised.

Even at the eleventh hour, more MOUs may be signed on Thursday. Individual business meetings to be held after Dr Mahathir's visit to the

Inter-Continental Hotel may also see more business deals being clinched.

From among the 28 Malaysian exhibitors, a good majority are first-timers in Eastern Europe, particularly the Balkan States. Their mission here is not only to secure contracts but to establish contacts and explore areas for cooperation in Croatia, which is currently struggling to rebuild its tattered economy after the war. - BERNAMA

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