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Mahathir-China

MAHATHIR HEADS TRADE AND INVESTMENT MISSION TO CHINA

By: Zainoor Sulaiman

BEIJING, Aug 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrives here tomorrow leading some 250 Malaysian corporate leaders and government officials to promote and enhance bilateral economic and trade cooperation between Malaysia and China.

During his four-day visit, Dr Mahathir will hold talks with his Chinese counterpart Li Peng at the Great Hall of the People and deliver a keynote address at the "Malaysia-China Partnership-The Beijing Dialogue" on Monday at the China World Hotel, here.

About 700 participants, including 450 Chinese businessmen and government officials, will be attending the two-day dialogue organised by Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli).

Asli executive vice-president Michael Yeoh, who is also the convenor of the Beijing Dialogue, said in a briefing to Malaysia journalists that the overwhelming response from Chinese businessmen and officials indicate their keen interest and seriousness to do business with Malaysia.

He said most of the top Chinese officials attending the dialogue were very keen to listen to what Dr Mahathir has to say in his keynote speech entitled: "The Dawn of the Asia Century: A Malaysian Perspective."

Other Malaysian speakers at the dialogue include Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Lim Keng Yaik who is to speak on "Strengthening Bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation between Malaysia and China, Pulau Pinang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon who will lead discussions on "Growth Triangles: The Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Experience -- Opportunities for Chinese Entrepreneurs", and Deputy Minister of Education Datuk Dr Fong Chan On who will speak on "Asia: The Centre for Educational Excellence - Partnering Towards the 21st Century".

Malaysian corporate leaders attending the dialogue include DRB-Hicom chairman Tan Sri Yahaya Ahmad, Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Hussain (RHB), Tan Sri Tajuddin Ramli (Malaysia Airlines), Tan Sri Jeffery Chean (Sungai Way Group), Tan Sri Willian Cheng (Lion Group), Datuk Francis Yeoh (YTL Corporation), Datuk Tan Chin Nam (Tan & Tan Development Berhad) and Tan Sri Vincent Tan (Berjaya Group).

Yeoh said at least 10 joint venture agreements would be signed at the opening of the dialogue between representatives of Malaysian and Chinese companies.

Apart from the dialogue, Malaysian businessmen will also attend a half-day workshop on "Doing Business in China" on Aug, 27 where they would be given an update on China's economic reforms and laws on joint ventures.

In a separate briefing, Malaysia's ambassador to China, Amir Jaafar, said the government would like to see more non-Chinese businessmen from Malaysia invest in China, particularly in the fields of construction and retail business.

He said Sino-Malaysian trade had grown rapidly since the signing of the Bilateral Trade Agreement in 1988. During the past five years, bilateral trade increased by 255 per cent from RM3.2 billion in 1990 to RM8.4 billion in 1995.

Malaysia recorded a trade surplus of RM2 billion last year with its exports to China totalling RM5.2 billion against its imports from China of RM3.2 billion.

Malaysia continued to register a trade surplus of RM1 billion during the January-June period this year with exports worth RM2.4 billion against

imports of RM1.4 billion.

Mahathir's visit to China is the fourth as Prime Minister. His last visit here was on Nov 20-28 last year. -- BERNAMA

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