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Mahathir-Macedonia

MALAYSIA AND MACEDONIA TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC TIES

By: Mokhtar Hussain

SKOPJE, April 21 (Bernama) -- Malaysia wants to further strengthen relations with Macedonia and promote better trade ties with the Balkan state, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said.

The Prime Minister said relations with Macedonia were vital for Malaysian businessmen to get access to the other Balkan states.

"Although Macedonia is small, we could not just bypass it...we should have good relations with Macedonia," he said at a dinner hosted by Macedonian Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski here last night.

He cited the example of Singapore which is also small but has now proven to be a successful and prosperous nation.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia hopes to promote more economic ventures and cooperation between the peoples of both countries.

Malaysia was the first among the Asia-Pacific countries to recognise Macedonia in 1992 following its emergence as a free and independent state.

The former Yugoslav republic which covers an area of 25,713 sq km, is landlocked to the north by Serbia, to the east by Bulgaria, to the south by Greece and to the west by Albania. It has a population of 2.075 million.

Dr Mahathir said at present, interaction between Malaysia and Macedonia was rather minimal.

"This is basically due to the lack of historical and traditional linkages between Malaysia and Macedonia," he said.

Dr Mahathir urged the private sector of the two countries to explore the untapped potential for cooperation especially in trade, tourism and investment, both bilaterally as well as in third countries.

He hoped that the restoration of peace and normalcy in Bosnia-Herzegovina would create the conditions for overall regional stability so vital for development and economic growth.

Dr Mahathir had earlier arrived here from Sarajevo on the last leg of his visit to three Balkan states which began in Zagreb. He will leave for Malta tomorrow. --BERNAMA

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