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PM-Dinner

REJECT UNRELATED LINKAGES TO TRADING RULES, URGES PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said any attempt to link international trading rules with unrelated social and political issues would place severe strains on the multilateral trading system.

"Such attempts by certain developed countries are unfortunate and therefore such linkages should be rejected," he said at an official dinner in honour of visiting Prime Minister of Czech Republic Vaclav Klaus at Sri Perdana tonight.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia and the Czech Republic share the common concern that new extraneous issues were being imposed on the future programme of the World Trade Organisation.

He said both countries also have been showing common concern for the plight of the people in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"Like the Czech Republic, Malaysia remains committed to the peace process and will actively contribute to the reconstruction of that war-torn country and happy to note that the Dayton Peace Agreement, despite its fragility, had brought peace and hope to the Bosnians," he said.

In this regard, Dr Mahathir called on the private sectors of both countries to jointly take part and contribute to the reconstruction efforts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On trade, Dr Mahathir said the Czech Republic is an attractive gateway in Central Eastern Europe for Malaysia to further develop trade and economic ties with the region as a whole.

He said the Czech Republic, as a member of CEFTA, Visegrad Four and as an associate member of the European Union (EU), is well placed to facilitate access for Malaysia's exports not only in the newly emerging markets of the region but also in the EU.

"Likewise, Malaysia could provide the natural springboard for Czech businessmen and traders to venture into non-traditional markets in the Asean and East Asian region," he said.

Dr Mahathir added that it was a source of satisfaction that trade between the two countries, although small, has shown a positive trend and there are many possibilities for increasing bilateral trade and economic cooperation as the two countries share similar growth-oriented economic policies with emphasis on privatisation and manufacturing.

"There are abundant opportunities for Malaysian and Czech businessmen to collaborate on a joint-venture basis as this would also enhance our competitiveness and stand us in good stead to undertake joint ventures in third countries as well," he said.

Dr Mahathir went on to say that the signing of the Investment Guarantee Agreement this afternoon had provided an additional facility to promote long term business confidence, trade and investment between Malaysia and the Czech Republic.

He said cooperation in the tourism industry is another area which Malaysia and the Czech Republic could develop as interactions between ordinary people would also promote better appreciation and understanding of Asian and European values.

The future outlook for bilateral relations between the two countries, he pointed out, is positive and promising.

"Our common perception on a number of global issues and the rich potential for economic collaboration between our two countries will serve

as a solid basis for the deepening, consolidation and enhancement of our future relations and cooperation."

In his reply, the Czech Prime Minister said his country did not look at the European continent only as one of its top priorities is to improve and broaden its contacts with other continents and countries.

"One of those is, undoubtedly, the fastest growing region in the contemporary world -- the countries of Southeast Asia, where Malaysia is among the most dynamic ones," he said.

"We are ready to establish wide political, economic and cultural relations between our two countries," he said.

Klaus said he was glad that during his visit, both countries could take an important step by signing the investment promotion and protection agreement in order to create the necessary framework for more intensive economic cooperation.

He praised Malaysia for successfully creating a new, modern society, although deeply rooted in its traditions, a society with its own dynamics, open to the world, focusing on development, growth and prosperity. --

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