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Cuba-Malaysia

CUBA READY TO ESTABLISH TIES WITH MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR, April 9 (Bernama) -- Cuba is ready to establish formal ties with Malaysia as it believes the two countries can work together at a higher level once they know each other better, its Foreign Minister, Roberto Robaina, said today.

"My country is entirely ready. We don't just want to have formal relations, we want to have practical relations. I believe that you have a lot of things we are interested in and in return we also have things of interest to Malaysia," he told reporters after a tour of the Technology Park at Bukit Jalil near here.

Robaina, who is here for a five-day official visit, was asked on the possibility of the two countries establishing diplomatic ties.

He said Cuba and Malaysia could enter into cooperation in various fields "because we want to have good and cordial relations with the whole world and we also want to have such relations with this part of the world."

"Once we know each other better, I have no doubt we shall have a better relationship for Cubans and Malaysians...a relationship which is beneficial for peoples of both countries and that is the purpose of our visit," he said.

Robaina said the most significant aspect of his visit here was that he brought along with him a letter from President Fidel Castro for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad which he would deliver personally "during the first opportunity" in efforts to develop bilateral relations between Cuba and Malaysia.

He is scheduled to call on Dr Mahathir tomorrow afternoon.

According to Robaina, Malaysia had undergone tremendous experiences from which Cuba had a lot to learn and he hoped that the visit would enable the two countries to learn about each other.

While here, Robaina said he would hold discussions and exchange ideas with Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat who led a delegation of Barisan Nasional leaders to Cuba last February.

"I will also hold meetings with local entrepreneurs as the main emphasis of our visit is to explain to this country and the entrepreneurs what Cuba is going through now in the process of inviting new foreign investments, particularly from other Third World countries," he said.

Asked what Cuba could offer to Malaysia, Robaina said there were many opportunities available to Malaysian businessmen in Cuba as a law on new investments had opened up all sectors except health and education.

"Malaysians do not have to compete with the American market as American businessmen are not allowed by their own government to invest in Cuba...so there are many opportunities in my country and I hope to see Malaysian businessmen taking up the opportunities," he said.

He said his country was regarded as one of the best in the biotechnical and pharmaceutical fields in which cooperation and exchange could be carried out.

Of American threats, Robaina said: "The United States is making a big mistake as they believe they (US) can take their Congress laws to other countries. I simply want to remind them that their Congress can have laws, but their laws are not for Cubans".

"I don't believe any country, no matter how powerful it can be, can enforce a law to tell the whole world with whom a particular country may

trade with or they may not trade with," he said.

He said Cuba has developed and hoped that the US would leave it alone to make its own arrangements. -- BERNAMA

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