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Dr Mahathir woos Bahrain investors

Ahmad A. Talib in Bahrain

THE Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad international roadshow continues today.

On Sunday, it was in Kuwait where local businessmen listened attentively to calls for efforts to intensify economic co-operation.

Yesterday, the roadshow moved to Bahrain where captains of industry were joined by bankers whose financial dealings are well known in West Asian countries.

The roadshow has been making headlines in local newspapers, dominated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who once again highlighted the need for Malaysia and its trading partner to seek ways to enhance bilateral ties for mutual gains.

The roadshow also made its way into Kuwaiti television where extensive footage was shown - from the Prime Minister's arrival for the three-day official visit to the long motorcade as the guests were taken to the Sheikh Hamad Palace where they are staying.

Speaking at a dialogue with the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Bankers here yesterday, Dr Mahathir started by laying down trade statistics between the two countries.

Bilateral trade between Malaysia and Bahrain, he said, had been growing steadily from US\$32.58 million (about RM81.45 million) in 1992 to US\$39.88 million in 1996 - an increase of 23 per cent.

Malaysian imports from Bahrain for the period ending last December was US\$18.09 million, a drop of 51 per cent compared to US\$37.2 million the previous year.

Major import items from Bahrain include iron ore and aluminium.

Malaysian exports to Bahrain showed a decrease of 16.3 per cent in 1996 compared to the year before - US\$21.79 million in 1996 to US\$26.04 million in 1995.

Exports to Bahrain consist mainly of palm oil (29 per cent), timber and wood-based products (17.3 per cent) and aircraft fuel (8.4 per cent).

Noting that Bahrain had adopted investment incentives to attract greater foreign participation in industrial development, Dr Mahathir urged the country's business community to look at opportunities in Malaysia with a view to making it the gateway into fast-expanding Asean.

"Work closely with the Malaysian private sector," he said of the Malaysian private sector representatives who are also part of his entourage during his visit to Bahrain.

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