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Mahathir-Trade

FRAMEWORK NEEDED TO ENHANCE M'SIA-SLOVENIA TRADE, SAYS MAHATHIR

LJUBLJANA, Oct 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called for a proper legal framework to be established within the next few months to encourage trade and economic cooperation between Malaysia and Slovenia.

He also said the various agreements that are under negotiation between the two countries would have to be finalised.

Speaking at an official dinner hosted by his Slovenian counterpart Dr Janez Drnovsek here Monday night, Dr Mahathir said he was glad that his visit here had made a good start with the signing of an air services agreement between the two countries.

Dr Mahathir, leading a 45-member delegation that includes businessmen, is on a three-day official visit to the Adriatic nation.

The Prime Minister said he was optimistic that given Slovenia's outward orientation, its wide use of the English language and the strong desire to foster trade and economic cooperation, there exists an excellent environment for enhanced bilateral cooperation.

Dr Mahathir said as a trading nation, Malaysia had particular interest in Slovenia.

"Slovenia is at a geographical cross-roads in the South Eastern Europe. From the Adriatic Sea which is one of the most easily accessible sea routes for us in South East Asia, Slovenia enjoys excellent access to the hinterland of Central Europe."

"Coupled with the outward commercial outlook and its imaginative economic, financial and monetary policies, Slovenia is viewed as a natural trading partner for Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir noted that like Malaysia, Slovenia had not allowed the smallness of its domestic market to dissuade it from embarking on projects for the mass production of both capital and consumer goods.

The wave of the future will be that trade will flow from areas that produce goods efficiently and cheaply to other areas, he said, adding "in this new regime of free trade, countries like Malaysia and Slovenia will have to find their niche."

On Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Prime Minister expressed regret that the Serbs in Belgrade seemed bent on unravelling whatever the Dayton Peace Agreement had achieved for the region.

"It does seem that only the threat of retaliation and reprisal will persuade Belgrade to behave responsibly," Dr Mahathir said.

He hoped that Slovenia would be able to play a positive role to influence its European friends, particularly the stronger states, to lift the arms embargo on the Balkan state.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had found that the cessation of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not adequate to ensure the future of that country.

"The country needs to achieve genuine reconciliation amongst the various ethnic groups. It needs to develop itself and it has to draw back its people who have sought employment and refuge elsewhere.

"Others who have been displaced should be allowed to return to their rightful homes," he said, adding that "this process of normalisation is not happening due to a variety of reasons, including Belgrade's intransigence."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was willing to work with Slovenia to contribute to the process of achieving normalcy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

He said the details of what the two countries could do together could be worked out in discussions at various levels.

"I am confident that such cooperation will lay the groundwork for a durable peace in this region," he added. --BERNAMA

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