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Hungary keen to emulate Malaysia's experience

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ECONOMIC interests were central in the talks yesterday between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and visiting Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Horn to enhance bilateral ties between the two countries.

Horn also showed a keen interest in Malaysia's successful privatisation programme and indicated that his country wanted to emulate the Malaysian experience.

Hungary is also keen to take part in Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor that has been promoted internationally by Dr Mahathir.

Acting Foreign Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar told reporters this after Dr Mahathir and Horn witnessed the signing of an agreement and a memorandum of understanding at the Prime Minister's Department.

The first agreement on Scientific and Technological Co-operation was signed by Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding and Hungary's Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Szabolcs Fazakas.

Malaysia's External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) director, Mohd Abdul Halim and Hungarian Investment and Trade and Development Corporation deputy general manager, Dr Mariann Farkas signed a MoU on Mutual Co-operation on Trade Promotion.

Syed Hamid who is also the Defence Minister said Horn also extended an invitation to Dr Mahathir to visit Hungary which the latter accepted. Dr Mahathir made an official visit to Hungary in 1987.

He said preparations were now being made for the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar's official visit to Hungary. The visit is expected to boost bilateral ties.

On talks between the two Prime Ministers, Syed Hamid said Horn was very impressed with Malaysia's move into the Information Age with the setting up of the MSC.

"He (Horn) has also indicated his country's interest to take part in the MSC," he added.

Syed Hamid said the two leaders also discussed the need to protect the environment as economic activities in both countries were moving at a fast pace.

Horn also wanted more Malaysians to invest in Hungary, particularly in banking and financial institutions, and tourism.

At present, Malaysian investments are in the majority-owned International Commercial Bank and 60 per cent Malaysian-owned Neutronics Electric Industries.

Malaysia's exports to Hungary in 1996 amounted to RM146.6 million, registering a significant increase of 94.9 per cent from RM75.2 million in 1995.

However, imports from Hungary amounted to RM34.8 million and the balance of trade is RM98.7 million, very much in Malaysia's favour. There is no Hungarian investment in Malaysia.

On tourism, Syed Hamid said, Hungary has a lot to offer to Malaysia.

"We can learn a lot from Hungary in this field as they can be considered very advanced in the tourism industry," he added.

He added that Horn also wanted to learn more about Malaysia's industrial and technology parks which had spurred the nation's industrialisation.

Syed Hamid said Dr Mahathir had also conveyed to Horn that Malaysia could be the gateway for Hungary's products while Malaysia could look to

Hungary as the gateway to the east and central European market.

Horn and his wife Anna were earlier accorded a red-carpet official welcome at Parliament Square yesterday morning to begin a two-day official visit.

The couple were earlier met on arrival at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Airport in Subang by Syed Hamid, after spending a two-day private tour of Langkawi.

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