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Hungary urged to consider joint projects in Bosnia

Kamarul Yunus in Budapest

BUDAPEST, Mon: Malaysia and Hungary can join forces to participate in the reconstruction of the Bosnia-Herzegovina economy.

Inviting Hungary to join Malaysia in such ventures, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Hungary is not only close to the war-torn Balkan nation but also has adequate expertise in various fields to join Malaysia in helping to rebuild Bosnia.

"The Bosnian Government has invited us to participate in the reconstruction of its country, particularly in airfield construction, communications and transportation.

"We are seriously looking into this but we think there is a scope for us to work with Hungary because the republic is close by and has the people with the necessary skills," he added.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to Malaysian and Hungarian journalists after meeting his Hungarian counterpart, Mr Gyula Horn. The Prime Minister arrived today for a two-day working visit to boost cooperation, especially in the tourism and information technology industries.

He told the press conference that although Malaysia has been offered several projects by the Bosnian Government, it has yet to conclude any contract.

"The financing of these projects is being looked into," he said, adding that Malaysia has been involved in the reconstruction of Bosnia for quite some time, while Hungary has extensive economic ties with its Balkan neighbours, particularly Bosnia.

Dr Mahathir also said Hungarians can use Malaysia as a gateway to the South-East Asian region. On the converse, Malaysians can use Hungary to penetrate to eastern Europe and Russia.

In addition, the admission of Hungary into the European Union will augur well for trade ties with Malaysia, he said.

"We hope to expand trade and economic relations with eastern Europe. Hungary can play an important role (in the plans) because it has a lot of connections and knowledge about the region.

"We also know that Hungary is doing quite well and we have established good relations with the Hungarian Government as well as with its private sector."

Besides trade links and joint projects, Malaysia can assist Hungary in its privatization programmes. "We are very familiar with privatization," he said.

Noting that over 400 government entities in Malaysia have been privatized successfully, Dr Mahathir said he is confident Malaysian entrepreneurs can be useful in Hungary's privatization exercises.

"We are looking specifically at air transport and river navigation.

"Our experience in other countries has so far been mainly in telecommunications, power generation, construction and port operations," he added.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), to which the Prime Minister said the project is the country's comprehensive gameplan to enter the information technology age.

The 15km by 50km corridor, extending from Kuala Lumpur to the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, "will provide all amenities and policies to allow multimedia companies operate there without restrictions," he said.

Saying that he would give a briefing on the MSC tomorrow, the Prime Minister invited Hungarian companies to participate in the project.  
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