

28 SEP 1997

Mahathir-Goods

MADE-BY-MALAYSIA GOODS CAN COMPETE WITH POPULAR BRANDS

By: Syed Jamil Jaafar

HAVANA, Sept 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Made-By-Malaysia goods could compete and accepted to be on par with that of popular brands in new markets like Cuba.

The Prime Minister said in many countries, Japanese products like Sony and Hitachi controlled the market but in new opening up countries like Cuba, every foreign product would get equal access.

"For instance, if we bring in MEC (Malaysia Electric Corp) electrical appliances, they will be accepted by this market just like they accept Sony products," he told Malaysian journalists on Saturday at the end of his three-day visit to Cuba.

" To them there is no difference, all these goods come from Tiger economies of the Far East.

" They do not see us inferior to the Japanese. To them, people from the East are clever to produce these goods," he said.

If efforts could be stepped up, Dr Mahathir said, Malaysia could boost its trade with Cuba which had not exceeded US one million dollars a year.

He said the distance between the two countries should not be a stumbling block as Malaysia had established trade links worth hundreds of millions of ringgit with Chile, the furthest to Malaysia.

Asked for his perception on Cuba, Dr Mahathir said pre-conceived idea based on reports were inaccurate as the situation here though backward but not as bad as had been portrayed.

" We find that they focus on certain sectors including research in pharmaceuticals and genetic engineering which are very sophisticated.

" This is quite surprising and impress us. Actually, their achievements are remarkable," he said, adding that Malaysia could learn from Cuba in certain sectors.

For instance, Cuba had successfully tackled dengue fever which is still a big problem in Malaysia, he said.

Dr Mahathir said he found the Cubans to be friendly and were keen to enhance ties and cooperation with Malaysia.

He said he and President Fidel Castro in their discussions yesterday found that "there is some common ground that we can work on."

" They practised a different ideology but if we can cooperate with China, why not Cuba," he added. -- BERNAMA

SJ TS