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Mahathir-Business

MALAYSIA EYEING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN SLOVENIA

By: Zainoor Sulaiman

LJUBLJANA, Oct 29 (Bernama) -- Malaysia wants to invest and have joint co-operation in areas such as construction of infrastructure facilities in Slovenia, property development and manufacturing, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here Tuesday.

Malaysian businessmen were also ready to participate in the service sector such as banking and finance, telecommunications, transportation, warehousing and tourism related activities, he told a meeting of Slovenian and Malaysian businessmen at the World Trade Centre.

Malaysia Airlines executive chairman Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli led Malaysia's 28-member business delegation to the meeting while the Slovenian side was headed by the president of Slovene Chamber of Economy Jozko Cuk.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a three-day official visit here, said being countries with small domestic markets, Slovenia and Malaysia must adopt a global outlook to achieve and sustain their economic growth.

"Therefore, apart from exploring the economic potentials of each other's country, the Slovenian and Malaysian private sector should explore opportunities for co-operation in third country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the current level of bilateral trade between Malaysia and Slovenia was still small, due to the structure of trade being concentrated on a narrow range of products.

Last year, total trade between the two countries amounted to US\$11.6 million with Malaysia's exports valued at US\$8.7 million, the bulk of which was crude rubber.

Imports from Slovenia comprising of mainly electricity meters, paper and paperboard, cement and fabricated construction materials amounted to US\$2.9 million.

Stressing the need to broaden the range of products and services to increase trade, Dr Mahathir said it was important that Malaysia could source from Slovenia and vice versa.

"In addition, we also need to look into shipping and other means of transportation, warehousing as well as the financing arrangements which are mutually beneficial to us," he said.

Stressing that Malaysia was keen to establish a "significant tie" with Slovenia, Dr Mahathir said the strategic locations of this Adriatic state in the Central and Eastern Europe could make it the centre of trade for the region.

"Moreover, Slovenia's accession to Central European Free Trade Association (CEFTA) which includes Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary at the beginning of last year opens up new markets," he said.

Likewise, Slovenian business should increase their presence in Asia by using Malaysia as a springboard for production and distribution of their products to the region.

"Being in the centre of Southeast Asia, Malaysia is an ideal location to serve as a gateway for Slovenia," he said.

With a combined total population of 460 million people, the huge Asean market and its liberal trading environment would provide and offer tremendous business opportunities for Slovenian business community, he said.

Dr Mahathir later called on the President of the Slovene National Assembly Dr Janez Podobnik at the National Assembly building.

The Prime Minister and his delegation also went on a tour of Bled, the

world famous Alpine resort by the lake with its picturesque island and old castle on the rock, about 60 km from here.-- BERNAMA  
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