

20 NOV 1997

Mahathir-Canada

MALAYSIA KEEN TO COOPERATE WITH CANADA IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 20 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia hopes to work closely with Canada in the field of information technology in addition to enhancing the already strong links in infrastructure development, education and environmental cooperation.

The Prime Minister said the two countries have begun to combine efforts to undertake various development projects such as the construction of the Light Rail Transit line here and the sky-bridge which connects the world's highest towers -- the Petronas Twin Towers.

"From a donor-recipient relationship, our bilateral ties have matured to become one of between 'equals'," he said in his message in the souvenir programme in conjunction with the Second Canada-Malaysia Business Leaders Dialogue -- "Malaysia and Canada: A Viable Partnership" in Ottawa, Canada tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir will be represented at the meeting by Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak who is scheduled to deliver the Prime Minister's keynote address.

Dr Mahathir said Canadian companies with their expertise and technology in many industries have much to offer the Malaysian business community.

Calling on the Canadian companies to invest in Malaysia, he said the government is also encouraging local organisations to venture abroad and to invest in strong trading nations such as Canada.

"Although Malaysia is a relatively new player in the area of high technology, we are prepared to learn from our more established partners," he said.

The Prime Minister said as Malaysia approaches the 21st century, it needs to enhance its international competitiveness by focusing on higher technological capacity, increasing efficiency and continuing improvements.

"We acknowledge Canada's expertise and technology in many industries and we welcome your investment in Malaysia," Dr Mahathir said.

He said Malaysia and Canada have a long-standing relationship and both countries share many commonalities.

The Prime Minister said the two countries are active members of the Commonwealth, United Nations, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) and the World Trade Organisation.

He added that Malaysia and Canada have also worked very well together under the Colombo Plan in the 1950s.

Dr Mahathir congratulated Malaysia's Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli) for organising the dialogue, saying the meeting of captains of industry "will indeed open more doors to greater cooperation and investment opportunities for both our countries."

His Canadian counterpart, Jean Chretien, in his message, said Canada is committed to a long-term partnership with Malaysia "that will build on our long-standing bilateral relations and our solid record of cooperation in the Commonwealth, the UN, Apec and the Asean Dialogue."

"Trade and investment are increasingly important components of the growing links between Canada and Malaysia," he said.

Chretien said 44 new business deals worth C\$445.3 million (RM1.07 billion) were signed between the two countries during his visit to Malaysia in January last year.

He said total bilateral trade exceeded C\$2.1 billion (RM5.04 billion)

last year.

The Canadian leader said the Canada-Malaysia dialogue would provide the participants an ideal forum in which to enhance business and economic cooperation between Canada and Malaysia, promote joint ventures and strategic alliances between entrepreneurs from the two countries and identify new business, investment and technology transfer opportunities.

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