

07 JAN 1997

France-Relations

MALAYSIA VERY ATTRACTIVE FOR PARTNERSHIPS, SAYS SPECIAL ENVOY

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 7 (Bernama) -- France considers Malaysia an attractive partner because it is a respected voice in the international arena and a viable investment centre, Jean-Claude Paye, Special Envoy of French President Jacques Chirac said here today.

"This country had always played the role of others and the leaders are outspoken," Paye told a news conference at the end of his two-day visit here. He was appointed special envoy to Malaysia by President Chirac on Nov 15 last year in response to the appointment of his Malaysian counterpart, Tan Sri Ahmad Kamil Jaafar by Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Paye said France's view was that it admired leaders such as Dr Mahathir who believed that it did not help to hide the truth and strove to make its voice heard internationally.

Paye, who was appointed as the president's special envoy to enhance further the existing relations between Malaysia and France, had high regards for Malaysian leaders especially Dr Mahathir and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"I am very impressed with the mixture of a balanced and quality policies in this country over the past years together with the leaders' desire to play an active role at the world economic scene," he said.

He noted that Malaysian leaders were capable of maintaining the political and economic stability of the country.

"Therefore I am proud to accept this mission in playing as a catalyst or a booster in seeking and promoting better relations between the peoples and governments of the two countries," he added.

During his short visit here Paye called on Dr Mahathir, Anwar and the government's economic adviser Tun Daim Zainuddin and also visited the Malaysian-French Institute (MFI) at Bangi, just outside KL.

Paye said the existence of MFI was a good start for France's contribution to help Malaysia meet the ever-increasing demand for highly-trained and skilled technicians and engineers to overcome the country's shortage of skilled work force for the country's vast development programmes.

"I am confident that this partnership between Malaysia and France will be beneficial to both countries and can be seen as a long-term venture for the enduring friendship of both countries," he said.

Paye said he expected to be here again in March to witness a big gathering of French businessmen organised by the French embassy and the French Chamber of Commerce where businessmen from Malaysia and other Asean member countries were also expected to be present. -- BERNAMA

ZAB AAM