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NZ keen to transfer expertise

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NEW ZEALAND is keen to transfer its technology and expertise in shipbuilding and yachting to Malaysia.

New Zealand Trade Development Board trade commissioner Barbara Kohler said Malaysia will benefit from New Zealand's long-established experience in sailing and shipbuilding.

"Yachting in New Zealand is a way of life. We'd like to transfer our skills and expertise to other countries," she said at a press conference to introduce New Zealand's yachting champion, Sir Peter Blake, at the Royal Selangor Yacht Club in Port Klang yesterday.

"Currently, three New Zealand companies are negotiating with their Malaysian partners to transfer technology in shipbuilding," she said.

Asked to elaborate on the joint venture, Kohler said the companies are still in the negotiating.

She said the companies are planning to build cost-efficient sail boats to enable local people to take up sailing at a cheaper cost. "They will also build tow boats," she added.

On the size of the shipbuilding industry in New Zealand, Kohler said that last year, New Zealand exported NZ\$400 million (NZ\$1 = RM1.76) worth of power- and sail-boats.

"It is a big industry in New Zealand. Currently, we have 88 boat-builders as well as suppliers," she said.

According to her, New Zealand has transferred its technology and expertise to Malaysia in areas such as telecommunications, forestry, biotechnology, marine-engineering and defence technology.

"We (New Zealand) are a small country and we are not a mass-producing country. As such, we concentrate on areas which have specialised market," she noted.

She said New Zealand will also assist Malaysia's Rakan Muda programme to promote sailing among the youths.

New Zealand will provide trainers and assistance in the curriculum and the preparation for the youth yachting programme, she said.

Meanwhile, Blake said that he had held discussions with Malaysia Yacht Association (MYA) president Datuk Johan Ariff on the youth yachting club.

"We will work closely in developing sailing interest among the youths here.

"The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is a keen yachtman and he is pushing for the development of marine industry in Malaysia," he said.

Despite the general belief in Malaysia, Blake said yachting is not an expensive sport.

"In New Zealand, if you have a little dinghy and life-saving jacket, you can go sailing. You don't need to join a yacht club," he said.

Johan, when met by reporters later, said that MYA is looking for a coach to train the country's yacht team for the SEA Games in Jakarta in October.

He welcomes the introduction of sailing as one of the events in the forthcoming Sukma (Sukan Malaysia) in 1998.

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