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Scope for ties with Germany in high-tech industries

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar said there was potential for co-operation between Malaysia and Germany in high-tech industries, especially now that Malaysia is shifting away from labour-intensive industries.

The King said Malaysian firms were keen to participate in projects in southeast Europe and Central Asia, and had considered Germany's strategic position and historical links with the regions.

Tuanku Ja'afar said Malaysia regarded Germany as a model country which had a strong industrial sector, high technology and which was a leader in research and development of various fields.

"There is also scope to enhance co-operation between Malaysia and Germany in the field of research and development," he said at a State banquet in honour of German President Professor Dr Roman Herzog at Istana Negara.

The King said Germany's success in developing the former East Germany had not weakened its economy. On the contrary, the united Germany had emerged a stronger political and economic force, he said.

The King said the new Germany had shown that an industrial country had the ability to make major structural changes which benefited the economies of developing countries.

In this respect, the King said Malaysia through South-South co-operation was transferring its technology and providing training to developing countries.

This initiative has contributed to peace and understanding between developing countries.

"It has become important to focus our efforts on economic development and to sideline politics," he said. "This has also helped to boost tourism, trade and other co-operation."

Tuanku Ja'afar said Malaysia had promoted the setting up three growth triangle areas with neighbouring countries to enhance economic development.

The King said many of the areas in the growth triangles constituted places which were lagging behind in the mainstream of development because of historical reasons or other factors.

"We welcome German participation in the development of the growth triangles," the King said.

At Government level, Tuanku Ja'afar said the two countries would continue to co-operate in managing peace missions at international and regional levels.

Earlier, Herzog, 63, who arrived in the afternoon for a five-day visit, was accorded a full State welcome.

He was accompanied by a 100-member delegation, including football legend Franz Beckenbauer.

The German President was met by Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding, who is minister-in-attendance.

After touching down at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport, Herzog and his delegation proceeded to the Parliament Square for the official welcoming ceremony where he was received by Tuanku Ja'afar and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The German leader was accorded a 21-gun salute where he inspected a

guard-of honour mounted by four officers and 104 men of the 1st Battalion Royal Malay Regiment under the command of Mejar Rafizi Shariff.

Herzog was later introduced to Ministers, senior civil servants and members of the diplomatic corps.

Germany is Malaysia's leading European trade partner after Britain.

Malaysia, in turn, is Germany's third largest Asean trade partner after Singapore and Thailand.

Trade between the two countries had increased from DM2.25 billion (RM3.33 billion) in 1987 to DM8.6 billion in 1995 in Malaysia's favour.

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