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## Tap potential, PM urges private sectors

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MALAYSIAN and Hungarian private sectors need to foster closer cooperation to seize the opportunities and exploit vast business potential in Malaysia and Hungary as well as third countries, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Hosting a dinner in honour of the visiting Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Horn at Sri Perdana last night, he said both countries have recognised the need to foster closer contacts between their respective private sectors.

"I am confident that the complementarity that exists in our two economies will result in good private sector networking," Dr Mahathir said.

In this context, the Malaysian Prime Minister said, the signing of the scientific and technical cooperation agreement and the memorandum of understanding pertaining the promotion of trade yesterday will further broaden the scope of bilateral cooperation.

"Malaysia and Hungary have previously signed other agreements. They provided a good framework for trade, economic cooperation, research and development and tourism," Dr Mahathir said.

He said Hungarian investors are welcomed to participate in Malaysia's national development projects and in the manufacturing sector.

He added that there is scope for Malaysia to use Hungarian expertise, particularly in high technology relating to the production of machinery, railway engineering, power transmission and timber-based products.

Dr Mahathir said Hungary's highly developed industrial and technological capacity is not well known among Malaysian industrialists.

"We would like to encourage Hungary to hold exhibitions and seminars to broaden the knowledge of Malaysian industrialists and other entrepreneurs and enable them to identify areas for possible joint ventures.

Dr Mahathir also said Hungarian businesses interested in gaining access to the fast-growing East Asian region can use Malaysia as a gateway.

Similarly, Malaysian companies can also use Hungary as a distribution centre for some of their products for the Eastern-Central Europe region.

"On our part, we will continue to encourage our entrepreneurs to participate in economic projects in Hungary, particularly those related to its privatization," Dr Mahathir said.

He said greater efforts have to be made in increasing the trade volume and diversity of trade between Malaysia and Hungary.

Total trade between the two countries amounted to US\$62.8 million last year.

Dr Mahathir also noted that Malaysian manufactured and semi-manufactured products have not been able to make significant in-roads into the Hungarian market and hoped that it could be remedied.

The Prime Minister also said Hungary's keen interest in joining the European Union (EU) will enable it to contribute to an EU that will more representative of all the openness that Europe believes in.

"Hungary's desire to join must surely be because there is benefit on being in the union. By the same token, there is disadvantage in being outside."

He also commended Hungary's admission as a member of the OECD Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development last year.

He said Malaysia and Hungary share common perspectives and approaches on

many international issues.

"The conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina requires us to cooperate closely. Malaysia, like Hungary, believes that the United Nations has a primary role to ensure international peace and security," Dr Mahathir said.

Meanwhile in his reply, Horn said his country would like to contribute its high level of creativity and intellectual capacity in bilateral activities.

He also said Hungary and other European countries should learn from Malaysia where different races co-exist peacefully with each other.

He also praised Malaysia for its emergence as one of the developed countries in the world.

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