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Iran to increase bilateral relations with Malaysia

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IRAN is looking at increasing bilateral cooperation and other mutual areas of common interests with Malaysia, its Deputy Foreign Minister Mohsen Aminzadeh said yesterday.

"Iran and Malaysia have been enjoying good relations. However, there should be more progress made.

"There is also a lot of potential in trade and investments, which we feel can be taken to a higher level," Aminzadeh told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur.

Aminzadeh is in Kuala Lumpur to deliver a special message from Iranian President Mohammad Khatami to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said the volume of bilateral trade is "not very much and much can be done especially in the field of oil and gas.

"Petronas, for instance, has participated in the oil and gas industry in Iran. We feel that they play an important part. Other similar ventures can be taken in new areas of cooperation in the oil and gas sectors such as drilling, exploration and transfer of piping.

"We are interested to cooperate with friendly countries such as Malaysia and we know that despite the economic problems in Asia, there is still much interest in the development projects that are going on in Iran," Aminzadeh said.

He added that there are several projects, which if accumulated, are worth some US\$5 billion (US\$1 = RM4.16) and is waiting for participation from international companies.

Aminzadeh said that there are other areas of cooperation between Iran and Malaysia as well, including manufacturing of industrial goods, construction of power plants, electronics, telecommunications and computer.

"Malaysians are also participating in the development of our tourism industry by constructing hotels and recreational areas," he said.

He also said since there are many areas of cultural commonalities, cooperation in the areas of arts and culture should also be initiated.

Aminzadeh added that since both Iran and Malaysia share common stands in some international issues such as in alleviating the tension in Islamic countries, there is a sense of brotherhood in bilateral relations.

On relations between Iran and the US, Aminzadeh said that historical background has made it such that problems exists between the two.

He added that there are some new contacts made between Iran and the US especially in the areas of science, academic and sports.

"We are pleased to say that there is some improvement. We hope that in the future, there could be some opening in 'this high wall of mistrust'," he said.

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