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## NZ leader's trip to forge partnerships

NEW Zealand Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters will make a three-day official visit to Malaysia beginning June 15. The visit is on the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

New Zealand High Commissioner, Ms Sarah Dennis said Peters will be accompanied by a delegation of senior business and government officials.

"Peters' visit is aimed at seeking new opportunities and partnerships in all possible areas. It also seeks to advance our interest and Malaysia's interest," Dennis said at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dennis added that relations between the two countries has been close, strong and a friendly one.

While in Malaysia, Peters will, among others, call on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Anwar and senior government officials.

New Zealand and Malaysia will also sign the open skies agreement during Peters' visit, where the national carriers of both countries will be permitted to operate between and beyond the two countries without restriction as to routing, or the capacity which may be provided.

Asked if the economic problems currently faced by Malaysia has deterred New Zealand businessmen from investing here, Dennis said they are still positive about Malaysia.

"We have had a positive view over the past years. The problems now have also affected us ... but it does not stop us because we know that Malaysia has been a good partner in the past and we are very sure in the future, too.

"The visit and the delegation that is coming is a sign of commitment and confidence on our side," Dennis added.

She also said that since the New Zealand dollar has declined approximately 14 per cent, this will make New Zealand more competitive in its goods and services.

Meanwhile, New Zealand Trade Commissioner to Malaysia, Ms Sally Ann Fraser said Peters and his delegation will also attend a seminar promoting two-way trade and investment links between Malaysia and New Zealand.

"The seminar, on June 16, aims to promote partnerships between companies of the two countries.

"Trade and business opportunities between Malaysia and New Zealand, including joint ventures, are moving from strength to strength.

"It will be great to have such a high powered delegation of government and business leaders here to discuss opportunities with their Malaysian counterparts," Fraser said.

She added that there are many new areas of joint ventures instead of the more traditional food and diary-based ventures.

"There are more and more ventures in engineering, electrical, construction, telecommunications and information technology.

"There has been, for instance, numerous enquiries about the Malaysian Multimedia Super Corridor by New Zealand software and telecommunications companies," Fraser said.

Sher added a good example of a successful joint venture between Malaysia and New Zealand companies is the Fish Shop.

Another example of a New Zealand company that has Malaysian owners is Opus International Consultants, which is a subsidiary of the Renong Group.

The company, previously a State Owned Enterprise called Works

Consultancy Services, was bought in 1996 from the New Zealand Government.

On trade, Fraser said Malaysia buys around RM1 billion worth of New Zealand's total exports and is New Zealand's tenth largest export market.

Seventy one per cent of the exports are food, mostly milk powder (47 per cent of all exports).

Exports for year-to-date February 1998 are RM984 million, still ahead of the previous year for the same period (RM940 million).

However, the monthly figures for January (RM44 million) and February (RM58 million) are down on the year's monthly average of RM82 million.

Dennis said Peters will also visit Penang where he will meet with Chief Minister Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon and attend a briefing at the Penang Development Corporation.

Dennis explained that Peters' visit to Penang does not necessarily mean that New Zealanders are focussing only on Penang.

"We have not taken a group like this to Penang before. We chose Penang because interesting things are happening especially in the areas of high technology manufacturing.

"New Zealand has been present in Malaysia for quite a long time. We have had reciprocal visits and various frameworks to cement this relationship.

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