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Two trade teams from Finland coming this year

TWO high-powered trade delegations from Finland will visit Malaysia this year to explore business opportunities.

Finnish Ambassador to Malaysia Erkki Huittinen said the two groups, comprising about 10 to 15 top executives of leading companies, were keen to tap the potential for trade and investment in Malaysia.

He said the trade missions, due before the end of the year, were especially interested to buy Malaysian products and negotiate sub-contract deals.

"Finnish investments in Malaysia now exceed RM700 million, and we are already looking forward to more investments next year and beyond.

"One could almost say that when you meet a Finnish businessman in Malaysia these days, he is here not to sell but to buy," he said at the opening of the Outokumpu Copper Products (M) Sdn Bhd factory in Pasir Gudang, Johor yesterday.

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman represented the Prime Minister and delivered his speech at the opening of the factory. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad could not attend because of the special sitting of Parliament in Kuala Lumpur.

Also present were Outokumpu Group chief executive Dr Jyrki Juusela and Outokumpu Malaysia managing director Pentti Jahi.

Huittinen noted that Finnish investment and trade links with Malaysia had gone up since its President Martti Ahtisaari visited the country in 1995.

Last year, for instance, trade between the two countries soared to an all time high of RM1 billion. This year, the trade has been in Malaysia's favour with increased exports of Malaysian goods.

He said there was also a rise in Finnish tourist arrivals in Malaysia, with the numbers expected to increase further with direct fortnightly charter flights from Helsinki to Langkawai in November.

"All these activities demonstrate the `business as usual' attitude of Finnish entrepreneurs. Our investments are based on long-term interests," he stressed.

On new Finnish investments, Huittinen said a RM1 billion factory to produce pulp and cardboard using palm oil residue would be set up in Pahang next year.

Outokumpu Malaysia is the group's second investment in Asia after its first plant in China. The Johor factory is targeting a turnover of RM300 million.

The state-of-the-art Johor factory, located on a 4ha site in the Pasir Gudang Industrial Estate, is fully air-conditioned. The production processes are computer controlled and aided.

The factory is run by a specialist team of seven expatriates and about 100 Malaysians.

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