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TRADE-US
US BUSINESSES TO INVEST MORE IN MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR, April 12 (Bernama) -- The US-Asean Business Council will make another trade visit to Malaysia in two months' time to discuss investment opportunities for US food and agriculture companies, said its president, Ernest Z. Bower, today.

The investments will be in the form of capital and technology which will enable the local agriculture industry to increase its efficiency, particularly in the poultry sector.

Speaking at a press conference after a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi here today, Bower said his meeting today focused on increasing US investments in Malaysia's high-tech industries.

They include areas in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), a joint venture effort between Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) and US-based Union Carbide in petrochemicals, Motorola in communications and Ford in automobiles.

Bower said the American firms which are keen to invest or increase their investments in Malaysia include Lockheed, Boeing, Daimler-Chrysler, Oracle Corporation, Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, Coca Cola and Aetna International.

Currently, US companies are the largest investors in Malaysia, having increased their investments by 66 percent to RM6.0 billion, representing a 66 percent increase from 1997 to the end of 1998.

The US is also Malaysia's number one market, he said, adding that it has a RM10 billion trade deficit with Malaysia last year.

Commenting on the Malaysian economy, Bower said he is confident that Malaysia is on the path to recovery.

Its economic indicators are showing signs of strength with a higher current account surplus and improved business confidence as reflected in the better ratings by foreign agencies, he added.

At a separate press conference, the deputy prime minister said he is happy with the rate of US investments in Malaysia and this showed that country's confidence in the Malaysian economy.

Even during the bad times, the Americans maintained their interest and did not pull out, Abdullah said.

In assuring the US businessmen on the viability of their investments in the country, Abdullah reiterated that Malaysia has a good investment climate, political stability and committed leaders in making things better.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad has successfully produced results in tackling the country's recent economic problems.

He said Dr Mahathir has implemented various measures to tackle the economic problems with the help of reputable economists working with the government.

Abdullah said changes in the economy would always be made from time to time if necessary to safeguard the nation's interest. -- BERNAMA

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