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Development of French-Malaysian relationship gathering momentum

Message from Ambassador of France to Malaysia Xavier Driencourt
BASED on what has already been built in the past, the development of the French-Malaysian relationship is gathering momentum. The political dialogue between the President of the French Republic and the Prime Minister of Malaysia has been enriched by other recent meetings and exchanges between the two leaders, where issues such as globalisation and reform of the international financial system were discussed.

France is listening to what Malaysia has to say about these issues because Malaysia achieved a remarkable success in its development and overcame very well the recent economic crisis.

This bilateral dialogue has also been reinforced in the past few months with the establishment of a friendship group between French and Malaysia parliaments, as well as regular visits of French MPs and high representatives of the French authorities to Malaysia.

France is becoming a strong partner to Malaysia and wishes to strengthen industrial and commercial co-operation between both countries even further.

France is encouraging greater investment in Malaysia in view of the fast pace of economic recovery.

This was stated by the French Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Francois Huwart, after a meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, when he was visiting Malaysia last March.

Malaysia's central location in Southeast Asia, its strong economic development as well as the high skill of its workers make it an ideal business opportunity. With more than 250 companies already established here (many of them being world-class companies with vast experience), France is contributing to the development of Malaysia and is committed to increase business in this country: new companies keep coming, establishing more and more regional offices.

French companies are especially present in areas such as electronics, information and space technology, energy, automobile, environment and water treatment and distribution.

In their participation of the development of the Malaysian economy, these companies stress the importance of industrial co-operation and transfer of technology, which are key issues to complete the trade partnership that France has developed with Malaysia.

Indeed, with Malaysian exports to our country amounting to RM5 billion, France is the fourth largest buyer of Malaysian products in Europe, mainly in the electrical and electronic sectors, as well as for the fast moving consumer products and air-con systems. French exports to Malaysia amounted to RM3 billion last year.

Large fields of co-operation exist between our two countries. Do you know for instance that one-third of Malaysian people drink tap water which is processed by subsidiaries of the French water groups, SuezLyonnaise des Eaux and Vivendi?

Do you know that French electronics firms like ST-Microelectronics, Thomson-CSF (in a local joint venture with Sapura), Alcatel or TPC employ several thousand Malaysian personnel in their factories? Alcatel's CEO and chairman, Serge Tchuruk, is actually a member of the special committee responsible for advising Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the Multimedia Super Corridor project.

French companies are present in many other areas and are very active in important on-going projects in Malaysia: Dragages et Travaux publics is part of the KL Sentral project of a new railway station; Alstom signed last year a contract with Tenaga Nasional to build the 2100MW Manjung power plant on the western coast; Technip, Bocard and Spie Capag are helping Malaysia to develop its oil and gas fields, refineries and petrochemical industry.

Finally, let me mention that Renault is producing a Malaysian commercial vehicle in association with Berjaya group and that Citroen has produced the Proton Tiara in its factory in Pekan.

Favoured by the good climate of the French-Malaysian relations, the cultural co-operation between our two countries has been flourishing in various fields and particularly, during the past three years, in higher education. More than 20 agreements have been signed between French and Malaysian universities, involving cross-exchange of students, implementation of new curricula and common research projects, in such fields as information technology, management and marketing, computer science and engineering.

We are very proud to welcome more and more Malaysian students in France. We are equally pleased to see that French students, attracted by famous realisations such as Petronas Towers or KLIA, or impressed by the Malaysian way of development, are attending classes in UiTM, USM, HELP Institute...Our goal is to concentrate on the quality of the relationship and develop fruitful common research studies, to take on together the challenge of this new century.

This year, on July 14, the French National Day, will be very special in Malaysia: together with our Malaysian friends, the French community will gather in Colmar Village in Bukit Tinggi. Colmar Village, which will soon be inaugurated, is a duplicate of the city centre of Colmar, this beautiful town located in Alsace in the eastern part of France. Indeed, this extraordinary project is also a concrete example of the friendship between France and Malaysia.

To this message of confidence in the future of the French-Malaysian relations, I would like to add my most sincere wishes of happiness and prosperity to His Majesty, Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia, to the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and members of the Government, to the people of Malaysia and to the French community in Malaysia.

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