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Philippines wants to develop halal food industry

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Philippines wants to develop a halal food industry and has chosen Malaysia as one of the better examples to learn from, Philippine commercial attache Glen Penaranda said.

"Malaysia's production of halal food is recognised worldwide. We are hoping to learn much from you," he said.

Penaranda was speaking at a Press conference after a dialogue between local businessmen and special envoys of Philippines' President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Paul Dominguez and Roberto Romulo.

Penaranda said the Philippines had considered other Islamic countries but felt Malaysia was a "good model" in the halal food industry.

He said the Philippines wanted to become a food producer. Currently, the bulk of its food exports are cereals.

Both countries have already begun several initiatives, such as joint committees on agriculture, he added.

Earlier, Dominguez and Romulo gave a presentation on the business and investment climate in the Philippines.

They are here to promote investment opportunities and to explain the policies of the new Philippines' Government to Malaysian leaders.

Dominguez said they had met Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this morning.

"President Gloria Arroyo's message to Dr Mahathir was that there is a new, fresh wind in the Philippines. The political situation has stabilised and the business environment has greatly improved."

Under the Arroyo Government, Dominguez said new policy thrusts would include greater focus on information technology and tourism, and the reconstruction of Mindanao.

On bilateral trade, Dominguez said 80 per cent of Philippines' exports to Malaysia was electronic products.

Last year, total exports amounted to US\$1.4 billion (RM5.3 billion) and imports from Malaysia US\$1.1 billion.

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