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PHILIPPINES-TRADE

PHILIPPINES EXPECTS ELECTRONIC MANUFACTURING SECTOR TO GROW BY 15 PCT

KUALA LUMPUR, March 8 (Bernama) -- The Philippines expects its electronic manufacturing sector to grow by 12 to 15 percent this year and trade in electronic components with Malaysia to increase.

Although concerns on the impact of the US downturn has heightened, the Philippines electronic manufacturing industry would still grow in the years to come albeit at a slower rate, said Paul G. Dominguez, the republic's special envoy to Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia and presidential advisor for regional development.

The industry grew by 20 percent last year.

Speaking at a press conference after the Malaysian-Philippines Business Council dialogue here today, he said, total trade between Malaysia and the Philippines amounted to US\$2.3 billion (RM8.74 billion) last year with exports to Malaysia reaching US\$1.4 billion (RM5.32 billion) and imports from Malaysia US\$1.1 billion (RM4.18 billion).

Trade in electronic products constituted 80 percent of the Philippines exports and electronic components that were exported to Malaysia last year amounted to US\$500 million (RM1.9 billion).

Trade in Malaysia has dramatically increased since the 1990s to US\$2 billion (RM7.6 billion) a year from a few million US dollars then.

Dominguez said the Philippines was looking at various avenues to increase trade between the two countries in the IT industry.

On other sectors, he said, the government had expressed its interest to Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to develop halal food industry to cater to demands from Malaysia.

He said the government realised that the Malaysian government imports a lot of its food requirements every year and this would offer them a great opportunity to export.

On Malaysian companies which had invested in the Philippines, he said that the top three Malaysian companies were Metroplex Bhd, Petronas and Maybank Bhd.

He said Petronas had built its liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) distribution system in southern Philippines while Maybank had expanded the number of branches there. -- BERNAMA

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