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SMI-PARTENARIAT

RAFIDAH TELLS LOCAL SMES TO TALK DIRECTLY TO POTENTIAL BUYERS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 23 (Bernama) -- "Talk to buyers instead of traders" was the advice given by international trade and industry minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz to Malaysian manufacturers, especially small and medium scale ones, when urging to be more pro-active in their marketing programmes.

In echoing Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call to Malaysian businesses to undertake their own marketing efforts instead of leaving them to third parties in foreign countries, Rafidah said, "Don't be afraid to talk to buyers."

Buyers, she said, usually tend to ask more questions than traders who could be more accommodating.

But by talking to overseas buyers directly, local manufacturers would stand to get better returns which otherwise would have gone to traders, she told a MITI monthly media briefing here.

By supplying directly, a long term relationship could also evolve between them whereas traders usually had little loyalty because they could be swayed by profit margins and hence switch suppliers easily.

As such, Rafidah urged more Malaysian manufacturers, especially SMEs, to attend the European Union (EU)-Malaysia Partenariat 2001, which is actually a business matching forum, at the MINES Exhibition Centre here on Nov 5 and 6.

The minister also related a story on a local small and medium scale entrepreneur who seemed content supplying his locally-made equipment to a manufacturer in Britain who later sold them under his own brandname to customers in Europe.

Rafidah said when the local entrepreneur was asked at a local exhibition why he had not sold directly to other customers in Europe, he replied that he did not have contacts.

"Asked why he had not joined in trade missions organised by MITI, he said he did not get a personal invitation," she said. "Our invitations are through newspapers," she said.

Rafidah said local SMIs need not wait for personal invitations and that they should contact their trade associations or MITI if they wanted to come along.

Meanwhile, representatives from some 300 European companies will attend the business matching forum. So far 318 Malaysian companies had indicated their interest to participate in the business forum to be organised jointly by the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers.

"We want want participation from more local manufacturers who should take advantage of the convenience as the European businessmen are coming here," Rafidah said.

Rafidah said the business matching forum would serve as a platform for participants to discuss business partnerships or joint ventures.

Six sectors have been selected for the two-day meeting -- engineering support industries, electronics, food processing and packaging, machinery and equipment, environmental technology and information and communication technology. -- BERNAMA

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