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Mahathir-Russia

RUSSIA LOOKING FORWARD TO DR MAHATHIR'S VISIT SOON

By: Khairdzir Yunus

MOSCOW, Sept 12 (Bernama) -- Russia looks forward to receiving Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad soon and appreciated the reasons for the postponement of the Prime Minister's visit here originally slated to begin Wednesday.

The Malaysian ambassador here Datuk Yahya Baba said Wednesday the prime minister's Russian visit was postponed due to uncertainties following the tragic events in the United States.

"With regrets, I have conveyed the message to the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry," he said when briefing Malaysian journalists who are already here to cover Dr Mahathir's visit till Saturday.

Asked on the Russia's reaction to the sudden change of event, Yahya said they felt sorry but understood the reasons for the postponement.

They hoped the visit, at the invitation of Russian President Vladimir Putin, will take place in the near future, Yahya said.

Meanwhile, in KUALA LUMPUR, Wisma Putra said Dr Mahathir's visit to Russia would be rescheduled after fresh consultations with Moscow.

Yahya said following the postponement, joint organisers of the Russia-Malaysia Business Forum namely the Asian Strategy Leadership Institute (ASLI), the Russia-ASEAN Cooperation Fund and MATRADE, the Malaysian agency promoting external trade, decided to cancel the gathering.

Dr Mahathir was originally supposed to deliver a keynote address at the forum here on Thursday.

Yahya said Bank Negara Malaysia and Vnescomnobank of Russia (VEB) would fix another suitable date for the signing of an MoU on Palm Oil Credit and Payment Arrangement (POPCA). The two central banks were originally scheduled to sign the MoU at the forum.

Malaysia and Russia currently enjoy very good trade ties with last year's bilateral trade standing at USD 265.6 million. Malaysia's export to Russia totalled USD 74.5 million and import, USD 191 million.

Total trade for the first quarter of this year was USD 65.4 million with Malaysia's export amounting to USD 29.5 million and export, USD 35.9 million.

Yahya said Malaysia was also making efforts to increase the number of Russian tourist arrival in Malaysia and towards this end the embassy here had formed a special unit which among things arranged for Russian travel writers and agents to visit Malaysia.

-- BERNAMA

KHY AHH RYN