

Lebanon keen to gain from our expertise

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PUTRAJAYA: Lebanon has invited Malaysia to participate in its privatisation programme.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said among the sectors identified were telecommunications and construction of hotels.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysian investors were to have undertaken hotel construction projects in the West Asian country but the 1997 regional economic and financial crisis had stopped them then.

"But now, I think it's time to go in again. They are inviting us to participate (in their privatisation programme)," he told reporters after hosting a luncheon for his Lebanese

counterpart Rafic Hariri at Seri Perdana here.

Earlier, the two leaders held a one-to-one meeting. Hariri arrived here yesterday with a 51-member delegation for a three-day visit aimed at strengthening ties between Kuala Lumpur and Beirut.

Dr Mahathir said the hotel and tourism industry was now booming in Lebanon following the Sept 11 attacks on the United States with more Arabs flocking to Lebanon and fewer to the US or Europe.

Dr Mahathir said Lebanon could also be used as a distribution centre for Malaysian products and goods to bordering and neighbouring coun-

tries

Asked about Petronas' involvement in Lebanon, Dr Mahathir said that the national oil company had some interest before.

"But now we have to look again (into the possibility of venturing there)," he said.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said Malaysia and Lebanon were set to sign two agreements - open skies and maritime - to further boost trade ties.

Lebanese Minister of Works and Transport Mohammed Najib Mikati had invited him to sign the agreements in Beirut in June or July, he said.