

Our door is open, Dr Mahathir tells Korean businessmen

Nst 24 MAY 2002

From Syed Nadzri in Seoul

news@nstp.com.my

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday invited more South Korean businessmen to invest in Malaysia, listing the many plus points like the country's strategic position in Asean and pro-business incentives.

He said there was also tremendous potential in areas like information communication technology, small and medium industries, education and tourism.

Playing his role as chief salesman for Malaysia, Dr Mahathir told a luncheon attended by major Korean businessmen that the Government could be the facilitators, but the initiative must come from players of both sides.

The luncheon was held in conjunction with the Prime Minister's three-day official visit to the repub-

lic, and coincided with a workshop and forum attended by businessmen from both countries.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived on Wednesday, was given an official welcome by South Korean President Kim Dae-jung yesterday followed by bilateral talks.

The Prime Minister said although South Korea was Malaysia's eighth largest trading partner, prospects for further growth were encouraging.

During a dialogue after his talk, Korean businessmen showered accolades on Dr Mahathir for his active role in encouraging businesses.

He was also asked by a director of Samsung Corporation whether Malaysia would co-operate with the republic in ICT and Dr Mahathir's answer was simple: Malaysia has a lot to learn from South Korea in ICT.

"Korea's programme in ICT is remarkable. In fact, it has the biggest penetration of ICT usage in the

world and we are very envious about this.

"In Malaysia, we have tried to promote the use of ICT from top-down but South Korea seems to bring it from downwards — in the schools, especially. As a result, there is a very big percentage of ICT users, creating a big demand — hence the rapid development of software and hardware.

"We want to learn from the Koreans in this respect," he said.

Dr Mahathir later visited the Hyundai-Kia Research and Development Centre in Hwaseong, about 100km from Seoul.

At the centre, which brings together the R&D capabilities of Hyundai and the newly-acquired Kia, Dr Mahathir was given a demonstration of wind-tunnel testing.

The sophisticated installation at the centre simulates the environment of a car driving on an actual road to determine not only wind resistance but also noise.