

Polish minister makes full use of tight schedule

By PAUL GABRIEL

KUALA LUMPUR: Polish Foreign Minister Dr Włodzimirz Cimoszewicz had barely 30 hours to sell his country's expertise to Malaysia, and left on Monday evening with good news for his government.

The minister, who flew back to Warsaw to report to the Polish Cabinet that met for the first time on Tuesday following the summer break, made full use of his tight schedule since arriving on Sunday.

He held talks with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Sved Hamid Albar, Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam, UN Special Envoy Tan Sri Razali Ismail and Senate president Tan Sri Michael Chen, and also had private meetings with other officials.

Dr Cimoszewicz said Poland was close to finalising an agreement with Malaysia on the sale of 64 Polish military tanks and maintenance vehicles. The deal is believed to be worth about US\$300mil

(RM1.14bil).

He said both countries had also agreed to intensify their scientific and technological co-operation, with Malaysia to use its marketing expertise to ensure a breakthrough for Poland's scientific inventions in the world market.

Poland, the ninth largest European country which is seen as a leader among countries in Central and Eastern Europe, has also offered its large base of about 150,000 scientific experts for networking with Malaysian universities and institutes.

"I never travel this far without any sense of purpose and strong intentions. It is in Poland's interest to be a partner of Malaysia. I can't say Poland's economy is in an Alice in Wonderland situation yet, but we have made great strides since becoming a market economy 13 years ago. Everything is going fine," he said at the Marriot Hotel in Putrajaya before departing with his wife, Barbara.

Dr Cimoszewicz made a historic visit here in 1996 as the Prime Minister of Poland, the first trip here by a Polish PM.

He stepped down as prime minister in 1997 when his party and coalition partners lost in the polls then.

His latest trip here was to follow up on Dr Mahathir's visit to Poland in March this year. Diplomatic ties between both countries were established in 1971.

He said his meeting with Dr Mahathir went well, adding that the prime minister remembered their first meeting here six years ago.

"Dr Mahathir is a gifted leader and it is quite sad to learn that he will step down next year," he added.

Dr Cimoszewicz, who also visited Singapore and Brunei, said he was confident that close relations between both countries would continue under the leadership of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.