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Mahathir-Tourism

DR MAHATHIR PROPOSES CODE SHARING TO PROMOTE MALAYSIA-MOROCCO TOURISM

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CASABLANCA, April 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has proposed a code-sharing arrangement between the national air carriers of Malaysia and Morocco to boost the movement of tourists to both countries.

"We should think about cooperation between Malaysia Airlines (MAS) and Royal Air of Morocco," he said at a dialogue with the Moroccan business community here Wednesday.

He said that since both MAS and Royal Air of Morocco fly into Dubai, having a code-sharing agreement would enable them to increase the number of tourists flying from Southeast Asia and East Asia to Morocco and from Africa to Malaysia.

When asked how Morocco could learn from Malaysia in terms of marketing tourism, Dr Mahathir revealed that Malaysia was able to see a leap in the number of tourist arrivals to 12.8 million last year from just two million in 1990 due to earnest efforts in promoting Malaysia as a tourist destination.

He explained that prior to undertaking its tourism promotion, Malaysia suffered from an image problem where many people could readily identify its neighbours but not Malaysia itself.

"Some people say it is near the Himalayas, some say in Africa because Malawi is there, others say we are in China while some say we are near Singapore. The truth is that Singapore is near Malaysia," he said amidst applause from the floor.

Dr Mahathir said that some of the promotional efforts included organising top international sporting events like the Formula 1 Grand Prix and Tour de Langkawi cycling race which were watched by several hundred million people around the world via television.

On the possible cooperation in the shipping industry of both countries, he said, "I believe MISC (Malaysian International Shipping Corporation Bhd), which is largely owned by Petronas (the national oil corporation), is talking with a Moroccan company operating out of Bahrain. But there are also other Moroccan shipping lines it (Petronas) can cooperate with."

Later, Dr Mahathir toured the manufacturing plant of Somaca, the Moroccan national car assembly plant, followed by a visit to Casablanca's Technopark, and the Handicraft Centre and Bazaar.

-- BERNAMA

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