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Mahathir-Russia
DR MAHATHIR ENDS RUSSIAN VISIT ON A HIGH NOTE

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

MOSCOW, March 16 (Bernama) - Amidst the freezing weather here, Malaysia and Russia advanced their warm and friendly ties with prospects of strengthening bilateral relations in wide-ranging areas.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who ended a three-day official visit, said it had been very successful.

"There is a desire on the part of both countries to work together," he told a press conference attended by Malaysian and Russian journalists before flying to Stuttgart for a three-day visit to Germany.

Dr Mahathir, who held talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin, said he found the Russian leader very keen to ensure this country of 145 million people maintained its position in the world.

"He is obviously a strong leader who I believe can restore Russia to this position of greatness," said Dr Mahathir, whose invitation to Putin to visit Malaysia has been accepted.

He looked forward to greater cooperation between Malaysia and Russia, which he described as an advanced country in many fields.

Dr Mahathir said Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov had responded positively during their talks yesterday to his suggestion that Moscow helps present the views of developing countries on global economic issues at the Group of Eight (G8) meetings.

Asked to compare the situation between his visit here in 1987 during the Soviet Union-era and now, the Prime Minister said there had been a tremendous change in their understanding of free market as well as the process of democracy.

"Russia has made a great step forward and I'm quite sure this will result in the Russian federation becoming one of the great power again," he said.

To another question whether there was a necessity for Russia to become a superpower to counter-balance the might of the United States, he said: "I think it is important in everything in life to be balanced".

"If you have too much weight on one side, you're likely to topple over. Therefore in international affairs there need to be a balance of power," he said.

This had been practiced in Europe for ages where they had a balance of power simply because if one party was dominant, there was a tendency for it to be domineering and very inconsiderate of others, he said.

"So if Russia is able to balance once again the might of other countries, I think it will afford many weak countries the choice of changing sides," he said.

He likened the situation with the human eyes.

"We have two eyes, just imagine if we are all created with only one eye, you cannot appreciate depth and because you cannot appreciate depth you are likely to fall down the stairs," he said.

Apart from talks with the Russian leaders, Dr Mahathir visited the Russian Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring Service (Rosgidromet) and the Shemyakin-Ovchinnikov Institute of Bio-organic Chemistry.

He also met the Muslim community and performed Friday prayers at the Perfect Mira Mosque - Moscow's main mosque and witnessed a flight demonstration of the Sukhoi SU30 which Malaysia was considering to acquire at the Zhukovsky Aviation Institute.

He also addressed a Malaysian business forum and met Malaysian students pursuing medical courses in Russia.

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