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Mahathir-Products

LIBYA KEEN TO BUY M'SIAN PRODUCTS AND GRANT CONTRACTS

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MANAMA (Bahrain), April 20 (Bernama) -- Libya is eager not only to directly buy made-in-Malaysia products but also to offer contracts to Malaysian companies, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Speaking at a rare press conference on board an aircraft, the Prime Minister said even Libyan Leader Muammad Gaddafi had informed him of his passion for Malaysian products.

"Gaddafi said that in his bathroom, the cosmetics, soap and other products are all Malaysian made," he said as the specially chartered plane flew above Saudi Arabian air space while on its way from Tripoli to Manama.

Dr Mahathir, heading for a two-day visit to Bahrain after trips to Libya and Morocco, is leading an 185-member entourage aimed at strengthening trade and bilateral ties with the three countries.

While in Libya, Gaddafi met Dr Mahathir thrice within two days. Diplomatic sources said the Libyan leader accorded such privilege only to those he considered as friends.

The Prime Minister said Libyans wished to buy Malaysian products but promotions and direct exports by Malaysian companies were still lacking.

"Libya wants to buy from Malaysia but there are no promotions and no arrangements to supply goods like electronic products directly to them," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there were greater trade prospects as a result of his visit but this depended on how Malaysian businessmen applied their business acumen.

"If we are good at taking care of people, insyallah we won't only be able to sell them goods...they (Libya) have many contracts that they wish to offer us," he said.

For instance, at a briefing during his visit on Friday to the Great Man-Made River project in Benghazi, 1000 km from Tripoli, an engineer informed the Prime Minister that through the Internet he had found out about a Malaysian pipe company which could supply a cheaper and better pipe than the ones used in the project.

"And we will help him," said Dr Mahathir.

The US\$19.8 billion (US\$1=RM3.8) project, developed in three phases, has a total storage capacity of 54.9 million cubic metres of water pumped out of 1,300 wells.

The pre-stressed steel wire used in manufacturing the pipes would circle the earth 280 times and the conveyance pipeline is 3,500 km in length, extending over an area roughly the size of the west of Europe.

Asked for his advice to Malaysian businessmen keen to conduct business in Libya, Dr Mahathir said they should be patient unlike in Malaysia where they could do business easily.

"(In Malaysia) we know the laws, we know the people, we can even approach the Prime Minister. You you can't do that in foreign countries.

"In foreign countries you have to learn to accomodate their culture, their laws and their practices," he said.

The Prime Minister also said that Malaysia's bilateral trade with Libya could be strengthened through Malaysia buying more of Libyan products.

"Right now we find that we are the ones doing most of the selling," he said.

Last year Malaysia imported RM14.7 million worth of products to Libya and imported Libyan products valued at RM4.9 million.

On the effect on Petronas and the national oil corporation of Libya following the good ties forged by Kuala Lumpur and Tripoli now, Dr Mahathir said he thought the two companies would enjoy a better business relationship.

This was despite the fact that Libyans generally did not feel that comfortable dealing with foreign investments, he added.

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