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Mahathir-Tourism

MALAYSIA HOPES TO GET MORE TOURISTS FROM POLAND

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

WARSAW, March 22 (Bernama) -- Singling tourism as a promising sector for Malaysia-Poland cooperation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that more needed to be done to encourage people-to-people contacts between the two countries.

"Malaysia is truly Asia and we can promise you that the experience of visiting Malaysia will be unforgettable as well as rewarding," he said at the official dinner here last night hosted by his Polish counterpart, Leszek Miller.

Dr Mahathir arrived here Thursday on the last leg of a nine-day, three-nation visit that had also taken him to Russia and Germany.

Saying that Malaysia would welcome more Polish tourists, Dr Mahathir said that tourism was an important aspect of bilateral relations.

At a business forum prior to the dinner, he said that both countries needed to step up information about each other so as to encourage their people to visit one another.

Malaysia will participate in a tour and travel exhibition here in September to encourage the Poles to visit the country. This central, eastern European country is as big as Malaysia but with a bigger population, of almost 39 million.

"As much as Malaysians are not knowledgeable about Poland, Poles are also not knowledgeable about Malaysia. We need to have a contact point," he said during the question-and-answer session at the forum.

Dr Mahathir said that although the Malaysian embassy here would provide as much information about the country, this was not sufficient. "One of the best way to promote each other is to hold a country week usually at supermarkets to promote products especially food together with cultural performances," he said.

The Italians and some other countries had been quite successful in promoting tourism through such promotion, he said.

"I think Malaysia and Poland should hold a similar week...that way we can increase the knowledge of each other," he said.

Dr Mahathir also suggested better communications in terms of air links to encourage tourism between the two countries.

"At the moment our airlines don't fly to each other's countries. MAS flies to neighbouring countries...I hope more Poles would go to Frankfurt or Vienna in order to fly MAS and I hope LOT (Polish airline) will eventually fly to Kuala Lumpur," he said.

He said that Malaysian and Polish travel agents should also look into the possibility of having chartered flights between Kuala Lumpur and Warsaw that would help promote tourism.

Apart from the forum, Dr Mahathir's tight schedule yesterday included talks with Miller, meeting Pres Aleksander Kwasniewski and witnessing the demonstration of the main battle tank at Wesola, 30 km from here.

Accompanied by Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, the prime minister was shown, among other things, the PT-91 tank which Poland is offering to sell to Malaysia.

Today, he will be flying to Gdansk, 400 km from here, to witness a naval boat demonstration and meet the Muslim community for Friday prayers. He will also present Malaysia's contribution of US\$5,000 to the mosque in Gdansk-Oliwa.

-- BERNAMA

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