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Mahathir-Poland

M'SIA, POLAND AGREE TO ENHANCE TRADE TIES

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

WARSAW, March 21 (Bernama) - A special promotion for Malaysian palm oil is to be held in Poland as the two countries agreed today to enhance trade ties.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the promotion was aimed at explaining the use of palm oil not just for cooking but for the manufacture of many food products and detergent.

"I'm told that the Polish people are not very conversant with palm oil which is the reason why you do not use as much palm oil as you should," he told a joint press conference with his Polish counterpart Leszek Miller following their talks here Wednesday.

Dr Mahathir arrived here this morning from Germany as spring is starting in Poland, a country as big as Malaysia but with a bigger population of 39 million.

The prime minister is on the last leg of a nine-day, three-nation tour that began in Russia.

During the talks, the two prime ministers agreed on the need for Malaysia and Poland to improve their trade ties despite the geographical distance between them.

"Malaysia is a trading nation and we need new markets all the time. Therefore, we would like to improve our trade with Poland," he said.

He said two countries should step up their trade directly and not through third countries.

He said Malaysia was interested in many areas of manufacturing found in Poland such as steel, aircraft, construction, machinery and railways.

He said they also agreed to improve the facility for air travel as there was great scope for increasing tourism.

However, more information on Poland was needed to attract Malaysian tourists to this country, he said.

"By giving more information on each other's product, I think we would be able to improve the trade between our two countries," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said Miller had accepted his invitation to visit Malaysia.

Asked if they talked about possible defence purchase, he said, they talked about the possibility of Malaysia acquiring some defence system from Poland which was well-known for it.

"It's not finalised but Poland is very high on the list," he told a Polish journalist who asked what was agreed.

When another reporter asked how long was the list, Dr Mahathir said: "The list has been narrowed down so that now for certain items, Poland is practically at the top.

"For all this things, we have to study very carefully because other people too are trying to promote their products and we have to make a choice, so we take a bit of time," he said.

Poland has offered to sell, among other things, main battle tanks, of which the Prime Minister was scheduled to witness a demonstration later today. Liszek regarded Dr Mahathir's visit as a breakthrough in enhancing ties especially in economic cooperation.

With such agreements as the avoidance of double taxation and investment in place, he said, it would encourage Polish producers and investors to send their products to Malaysia.

Liszek became prime minister after his Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)

secured an overall majority in parliamentary election last September. After their talks, both prime ministers headed their respective sides for delegation discussion.

The Malaysian delegation comprised, among others, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir was accorded a red carpet welcome, marking the first Malaysian prime minister to visit Poland since diplomatic relations were established between the two countries 30 years ago.

Dr Mahathir later met with Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski and addressed a Malaysia-Poland business luncheon.

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