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Mahathir-Putin

M'SIA, RUSSIA TO ENHANCE TIES IN WIDE-RANGING AREAS

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

MOSCOW, March 14 (Bernama) - Russian President Vladimir Putin has accepted an invitation to visit Malaysia as the two countries pledged to enhance their bilateral ties in wide-ranging areas.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad extended the invitation to Putin during their talks at the Grand Kremlin Palace on the second day of his three-day official visit to Moscow.

Describing the talks as fruitful, Dr Mahathir said a lot of areas were covered, including bilateral cooperation in research and development, trade and the possibility of sending Malaysian students here and staff for training.

"We also discussed the possibility of purchasing some military equipment from Russia and for this we will study the possibilities," he said at a joint press conference with Putin after they led their respective sides for delegation meeting that followed their "four-eyed" talks.

Dr Mahathir is here on the first stop of a nine-day visit to three countries that will also take him to Germany and Poland. He will leave for Stuttgart, Germany on Saturday.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was looking forward to cooperate with Russia in the area of weather control.

He was impressed with the work and findings of the Russian Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring Service (Rosgidromet) which he visited this morning.

Putin echoed Dr Mahathir's optimism that the meeting would contribute towards greater cooperation and interaction between the two countries.

He noted that Russia-Malaysia relations were developing positively and that the visit by Dr Mahathir had enabled them to analyse the current state of the bilateral ties.

The two countries would celebrate the 35th anniversary of their diplomatic relations next month.

"We have identified prospects and areas of future cooperation including economic interaction," he said through an interpreter.

Acknowledging Malaysia as a major producer of electronic equipment, Putin said the country would make a good partner with Russia in carrying out cooperation in hi-tech areas.

He also noted that Malaysia had launched a satellite using a Russian space vehicle and that they had also looked into the possibility of continuing the cooperation.

"Malaysia is located on the Equator and this is a very convenient place for such activities," he said.

Russia was also keen to cooperate with Malaysia in areas such as energy, hydro-energy and bio-technology, he said.

The two countries, he said, had good cooperation in defence and this could be enhanced.

"Malaysian experts had the opportunity to see the high quality of Russian military equipment...our experts believe that it is possible for us to develop not only trade in this area but also cooperation," he said.

On international affairs especially concerning terrorism, Putin said Russia agreed with Malaysia that attention must be given to eliminate the root causes of the problem.

"The role of the United Nations should be strengthened in many areas including to fight terrorism," he said.

He said Russia welcomed the recent resolution of the UN Security Council that recognises the rights of the Palestinians to have their own state.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia appreciated Russia's stand in dealing with the problem in West Asia in particular the Palestinian issue.

Putin said Moscow would support direct trade links between the Russian regions with Malaysian partners.

Leaders of some of the regions also attended the delegation talks in an effort to establish contacts.

The Malaysian delegation include Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Science, Environment and Technology Minister Datuk Seri Law Hieng Ding, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng and Bank Negara Governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz.

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