

12/07/2002

Tighter security in US should not stop traders

Azura Abas

MALAYSIAN businesses planning to venture into the US market should not be deterred by tighter security measures following terrorist attacks there last September.

Malaysia Trade Commissioner to New York Jamaludin Hussain said while it is more difficult to secure a visa to enter the US now after the September 11 attack, businesses should not use this as an excuse.

He said this problem has been cited by Malaysian businessmen planning to participate in trade fairs and missions in the US organised by the Malaysia External Trade Development Corp (Matrade).

Speaking to reporters after presenting a paper on "Market Scenario in the US" in Shah Alam yesterday, Jamaludin said even American businessmen were complaining that the tighter security discouraged those who wanted to come to the US for business or as tourists.

"They are now voicing their concern via their representatives, saying that the US should be more flexible," he added.

Also present were State Entrepreneur, Youth and Small and Medium Industry Committee chairman Datuk Abdul Fatah Iskandar and SSIC Bhd (Selangor State Investment Centre) general manager Jabar Kembali.

Jamaludin said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's recent meeting with US President George Bush helped boost the confidence of many in both countries.

Earlier, Jamaludin also advised Malaysian businessmen to open some form of business operations in the US.

"This is because the buyers over there will know that you are serious in doing business in their country as you have made your presence felt to them.

"Furthermore, American importers are interested in long-term trade relationships," he said.

On the target market in the US, he said, many Malaysian companies now viewed Miami as a marketing hub to other business opportunities including to Central America, Venezuela, Colombia and Equador.

Last year, Malaysia's exports to the US amounted to RM67.7 billion while imports from the US were worth RM44.8 billion.

Meanwhile, Abdul Fatah said Selangor received three projects worth RM185.21 million from the US between January and April this year.

The three projects would provide job opportunities to 322 people.

In addition, he said, the Selangor State Government worked hard to market its products worldwide.

"Menteri Besar (Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo) wants to see our local products in every country around the world by 2005," he said.

He said there was a bright future in exporting coconuts to the US, but the commodity itself in Selangor had declined because many coconut trees were cut down and replaced with other trees a few years back.

"Previously, we were not aware of the coconut market value. Now one should consider looking into this commodity seriously," he said.