

24 MAR 2002
Mahathir-Return
PM RETURNS FROM TRIP TO EUROPE

KUALA LUMPUR, March 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this morning returned from a nine-day visit to Russia, Germany and Poland.

The prime minister, accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, was received by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and other dignitaries at the RMAF base in Subang near here.

Speaking to reporters, Dr Mahathir said the visit had helped Malaysia to strengthen diplomatic and trade ties with the three countries.

Dr Mahathir said he was well received by the leaders of these countries, with whom he exchanged views on international and bilateral issues.

He said more Malaysian students might be sent to study medicine in Russia.

Dr Mahathir said several multinational giants he visited in Germany, like Mercedes and Siemens, had expressed interest to increase investments in Malaysia.

The leaders of Bavaria, the richest state in Germany, and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder were also keen to enhance ties with Malaysia, he said.

Dr Mahathir said he noticed that Poland had business opportunities which could be tapped by Malaysian entrepreneurs if "we are hardworking".

Poland was a very beautiful country suitable to be visited by Malaysians, he said.

The prime minister said his delegation, which included government officials and businessmen, performed Friday prayers together with Muslims in Russia and Poland.

"Their faith in Islam appears to be still strong although they were under communist rule for a long time.

"They want closer ties with Malaysians, especially religious figures here," he said.

Asked whether problems or issues were raised at his dialogue with businessmen in the three countries, Dr Mahathir said: "Not many."

He said Polish businessmen, for example, wanted to know the situation in Malaysia and how they could conduct business in the country.

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