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Mahathir-Bavaria

M'SIA HAS MUCH TO LEARN FROM BAVARIA, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

By: Abdul Muin Abdul Majid

MUNICH, March 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia has much to learn from Bavaria which has transformed, over a relatively short period of time, from an agricultural economy to the most dynamic and modern industrial state in Germany.

The Prime Minister described the Bavarian capital of Munich as a beautiful city which had managed to blend history and tradition with its modern status as the high-tech centre of this country.

In his speech at a dinner hosted in his honour by Minister President of Bavaria Dr Edmund Stoiber here Monday night, Dr Mahathir congratulated the state for its success.

"Today, Bavaria is still known for its picturesque mountains and rolling farmlands, its cuckoo clocks and October Fest. But Bavaria is today also the most prosperous state in Germany," he said.

Dr Mahathir will travel to the German capital of Berlin Tuesday after starting his three-day official visit to Germany in Munich yesterday.

Bavaria is the largest of Germany's 16 states with an area of 70,552 sq km. It has over 12 million inhabitants and is located in southern Germany. Munich has over one million population.

The state accounts for 32 per cent of the German Gross Domestic Product.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was quite already known to many investors from Bavaria and that he could assume they felt Malaysia offered a profitable and safe place for their investments.

"We would like to assure you that Malaysia will continue to be a safe and stable place for your investments," he said.

The Prime Minister said there was so much that Malaysia could offer investors from Bavaria.

"While we are open to all value-added and high-tech ventures, we are particularly interested in information and communication technology and the multimedia," he added.

Many world class companies such as Siemens and BMW are headquartered in Munich.

The dinner was also attended by the Prime Minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

At an earlier function, Dr Mahathir told a gathering of some 200 Malaysian students and members of the Malaysian community in Germany that they should not only study or work but also learn about the value system and ethics of the people of Bavaria which had contributed to the development of the state.

He said this would include being hospitable to foreigners.

"One day Malaysia can be as rich as Bavaria and at that stage, we must also think about helping others, just like the facilities that we get to use in Bavaria to acquire skills and knowledge," he said.

Meanwhile, at a dialogue session with German businessmen at the Malaysian-German Business Dialogue Monday, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would uphold patent rights and intellectual property because it was as much in the country's interest to do so as it was in the interest of those who had registered their rights.

"It is not in our interest to allow people to breach patent laws. We have a big enforcement body which comes under the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs, and they really go round to confiscate, arrest

people who copy (illegally)," he said.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said any country that tried to change suddenly, even if it was for the better, would face tremendous problems.

"When we change, we should change slowly, gradually. The problem with some countries like former Communist countries was that they suddenly switched to a free market and democratic system, and the whole thing collapsed.

"It is not that changing is bad, becoming a free market or democracy is bad. It is just that the change is too rapid," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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