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RAFIDAH-MYANMAR

M'SIA LOOKS FORWARD TO ENHANCE TRADE TIES WITH MYANMAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 19 (Bernama) -- Malaysia sees bright prospects in various sectors including infrastructure, Information Technology and telecommunications which Myanmar is offering to investors, said Minister of International Trade and Industry, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

She said sharing of corporate experiences and technical expertise would certainly enhance the competitiveness of both economies and help reduce the overall costs of business, which would be mutually beneficial to private sectors in both countries.

"Malaysia looks forward to further enhancing bilateral trade and investment ties with Myanmar," she said while noting that there were also potential for collaboration amongst the SMEs of both countries.

Rafidah was speaking at the Myanmar-Malaysia Technology Conference on Business Opportunities and Technology Collaborations between Malaysia and Myanmar entitled "regional trade as a catalyst for economic growth" in Yangon, Myanmar.

Rafidah and other Malaysian delegations, led by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, are on a two-day working visit to Myanmar.

On a government-to-government basis, Malaysia was prepared to enhance collaboration with Myanmar, particularly in capacity building, by sharing experiences in the development of a coordinating centre for investment and in human resources.

Malaysia is the second largest contributor to intra-Asean trade in 2001, accounting for 24 percent of total intra-Asean trade, which is still relatively small.

Total trade with Myanmar amounted to US\$275 million in 2001, representing less than one percent of Malaysia's global trade while total exports amounted to US\$197 million and imports were US\$78 million.

"The potential to increase trade between us is very promising as the necessary framework is already in place," she said.

Malaysia and Myanmar have signed a number of bilateral agreements including the Bilateral Trade Agreement and Counter Trade Agreement.

She also complimented Myanmar's Investment Law which allow foreign investors to set up businesses which are wholly owned or in the form of joint venture (excluding some sectors).

Rafidah said tax incentives which included exemption from corporate tax and import duty which were available, could also provide a favourable environment for foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into Myanmar.

Malaysia's total investment in Myanmar up to the third quarter of 2001 amounted to US\$597 million comprising mainly in oil and gas, hotel and tourism and real estate and manufacturing. -- BERNAMA

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