

Mahathir visits two major cities in 'ümme

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He witnesses signing of pacts on technical collaboration

BY WONG CHUN WAI

SIMFEROPOL (Ukraine): Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad continued his hectic schedule in Ukraine by making visits to two major cities yesterday.

He flew to the port city of Odessa, 480km south of the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, where he witnessed the signing of three agreements on technical collaboration between the private sectors of the two countries.

Odessa, Ukraine's most important port and founded in 1794 by Catherine the Great, became wealthy in the 19th and 20th centuries through shipping activities and is today regarded as Ukraine's southern window to Europe.

Against the backdrop of the Black Sea at the Odessa Trade Port, Dr Mahathir opened palm oil storage facilities belonging to Odessa JM Ventures Sdn Bhd and Odessa Port Transshipment Complex.

He was also briefed on the setting up of the Malaysian Trade Centre here.

Dr Mahathir hoped the port would be used as a gateway for the distribution of Malaysian products to Ukraine and other countries in the region.

He said Malaysia was always looking for new markets for its palm oil and believed its export to Ukraine would help lower the cost of process-

ing food here.

Dr Mahathir then left for Simferopol, the capital of Crimea, where

he presented a donation of US\$10,000 (RM38,000) for the construction of a mosque.

He then departed for Yalta by road, where he had a working dinner with Crimean leaders.

Yalta, 80km from here, was where the three Allied leaders during the Second World War—Josef Stalin (Soviet Union), Franklin D. Roosevelt (United States) and Winston Churchill (Britain)—met from Feb 4 to 11, 1945 to discuss Europe's post-war reconstruction.

Earlier at the donation ceremony, Dr Mahathir said he was very heartened to be part of the ceremony to honour the Tartar population in Crimea, who became victims of Stalin's oppressive policies during the Second World War.

"The tragic events where 188,626 Tartars were forcibly deported en masse from their own land and villages to Central Asia and other far away parts of the Soviet Union will always be remembered," he said.

He said he was told that the Crimea Autonomous Republic was working hard to resettle the Tartar returnees and attend to their needs.

Dr Mahathir hoped the donation would be seen as a modest contribution to help "bring back in a small way the environment you have been familiar with."

Today, he will wrap up his visit to Ukraine by meeting Malaysian students at the Crimea State Medical University and test-ride naval vessels.