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Malaysia-Ties

BETTER PROSPECTS FOR ENHANCING MALAYSIA-BRAZIL TIES

By: Mokhtar Hussain

SAO PAULO, March 19 (Bernama) -- Despite the distance between them, Malaysia and Brazil are nevertheless set to further enhance their ties at various levels such as through more visits from among their peoples.

Describing his visit to Brazil as "useful and worthwhile", Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there was tremendous potential for both countries to increase bilateral trade.

"Although it is far away, quite a distance from Malaysia, there may be some interest among Malaysian tourists to visit Brazil. I was in the Amazon and I found that the Amazon is a very interesting place."

"It is where the Malaysians got their first rubber tree from. It is interesting to go and see...natural rubber trees growing in the forest in Brazil," he told the Malaysian media, covering his visit, after visiting the Embraer aircraft manufacturing company and Avibras which produced air-to-ground and surface-to-surface weapon system in San Jose dos Campos near here.

During his tour, Dr Mahathir was briefed by the presidents of both companies, Mauricio Botelho and Joao Verdi Carvalho Leite respectively.

Prior to his arrival in Brasilia for a four-day official visit, Dr Mahathir who is on a two-month leave, spent several days in the Manaus Resort City in Central Amazon.

The rubber from the Amazon forest was smuggled to England in 1876 before it was brought to Malaya in the early 20th century by H.N.Ridley.

Dr Mahathir said he had fruitful discussions with Brazilian President Luiz Enacio Lula da Silva in Brasilia where both leaders shared the same views on various matters affecting Malaysia and Brazil.

"But we need to buy more things (from Brazil), not only military equipment but other things as well, he said.

Brazilian businessmen needed to be told about investment opportunities in Malaysia, he said.

Malaysia would also consider sending a trade delegation here.

The Malaysian army had purchased ASTROS II or Artillery Saturation Rocket System from Avibras in October last year

Asked whether Malaysia was planning to buy more military equipment from Brazil, Dr Mahathir replied that it was not for him to decide on the matter.

The Prime Minister was also asked to comment on the United States (US) ultimatum to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to flee Iraq or face military action.

Dr Mahathir said it was still not too late for other countries to try to persuade the US not to resort to military action against Iraq.

He said although war seemed to be looming, there could still be a last minute effort to prevent it from happening.

"President (Lula) of Brazil has written to (UN Secretary General) Kofi Annan, asking him to convene a meeting of heads of government, which are not represented in the Security Council. If that is responded to by Kofi Annan, we may still be able to do something," he said.

From here, Dr Mahathir flew to Rio de Janeiro.

-- BERNAMA

MOK KHY AAM