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NAM-Mahathir (Economy)

DO MORE TO ENHANCE NAM TRADE LINKS, SAYS PRIME MINISTER

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) member countries to intensify efforts to develop new areas of economic cooperation to accelerate trade among themselves.

The prime minister said that while the governments continuously sought new avenues to establish and strengthen economic links between member nations, the private sectors should on their own initiate programmes and activities to explore business collaboration opportunities.

He also said that with the feedback from the private sector, the NAM governments could facilitate business collaboration and investments by providing a conducive environment for business activities to expand and flourish.

"The contribution of NAM member countries to global trade indicates that the potential for trade and business collaboration has yet to be fully realised," he said when opening Showcase Malaysia 2003 and Tourism Fair 2003 at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC), here.

Dr Mahathir said that in 2001, NAM's 114 members accounted for US\$880.5 billion or only 14.3 per cent of the world exports and US\$736.9 billion (11.4 per cent) of the world imports. (US\$1=RM3.80)

Dr Mahathir said the NAM member countries' share of world trade was thus not significant, taking into account that NAM was made up of a large number of countries.

He also said that NAM, formed over four decades ago out of a need for a political grouping for the developing countries to safeguard their interests, must now also focus on fostering greater economic cooperation and trade linkages among its members to remain relevant.

"The time has come when the private sector must assume a greater role in fostering cooperation within NAM through economic activities.

"Private-sector led initiative needs to be developed to set the momentum for growth in business," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the private sector must be innovative to capitalise on the vast potentials for trade and investments.

"Apart from using conventional tools to establish trade links, the private sector must be creative in exploring alternative arrangements like counter-trade, contract manufacturing and joint-venture investments to exploit the business potentials within NAM.

"The organisation of trade missions and business visits to NAM countries could facilitate stronger private sector linkages," he said.

Another avenue to foster economic cooperation among NAM would be the possibility of forming links with regional groupings, he said.

NAM countries are members of various regional groupings like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), Arab Common Market, Economic Community of West African States, Gulf Cooperation Council, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Southern African Development Community.

On another note, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia saw the potential of NAM members contributing towards mitigating any negative impact of globalisation.

Dr Mahathir said that by working together, NAM, 83 of whose members are also members of the WTO, could be an influential group to negotiate multilateral trade to protect the interests of developing countries.

He said that this was because trade liberalisation measures initiated by the WTO and the advent of globalisation had not only opened up markets but also intensified competition.

On Showcase Malaysia and Malaysia Tourism Fair, he said that by bringing together a cross-section of Malaysian products and services, the events would help create awareness of the potential for trade expansion and economic collaboration among NAM business communities.

"The possibility of having a NAM trade exhibition in conjunction with future NAM summits to showcase the products and services that are available in NAM member countries should be explored.

"Such an exhibition can contribute towards strengthening linkages between the business communities of NAM member countries," he said.

He also said that to promote tourism among NAM countries, bureaucratic procedures must to be reduced to facilitate travel.

Furthermore, travel and tour agencies in NAM needed to be encouraged to promote their respective countries.

Both events run from today till Feb 26.

-- BERNAMA

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