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Ireland-Invest

IRELAND AIMS TO ENHANCE TIES AND INVESTMENT WITH M'SIA

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 8 (Bernama) -- Ireland aims to enhance bilateral relations and investment with Malaysia, especially in the fields of information technology communication (ICT) and education.

"Ireland and Malaysia need to build on the many ties that already exist and strive to create fresh ones," said its Foreign Minister, Brian Cowen, who is on a four-day official visit here beginning today.

It is the first time an Irish foreign minister is visiting Malaysia.

Cowen's visit aims to further enhance the already friendly and fruitful relations between the two countries.

Malaysia is Ireland's third largest market outside Europe with various major investments in both directions. In 2001, the two-way trade between Ireland and Malaysia totalled RM6.0 billion.

Cowen said: "Malaysia is now Ireland's most important market in Asean and the second largest trading partner throughout Asia. There is considerable scope for further expanding trade and investment, such as in the ICT sector.

"Ireland and Malaysia have notable strength in ICT, in which Ireland can be a key European partner for Malaysia."

Irish-Malaysian ties in education are also strong and traditional. There are more than 800 Malaysians currently studying in Ireland and many thousands of Malaysians are graduates of Irish universities, mainly in medicine.

Cowen said Irish universities and colleges were now in a position to make additional places available to Malaysian students and were looking for ways to cooperate actively with Malaysian educational institutions.

The cooperation could include English language studies where both countries had relevant experience and expertise, he said.

A Malaysian Irish Alumni Association has also been established recently.

During his visit, Cowen called on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his counterpart, Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

He will also witness the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Chamber of Commerce of Ireland and the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers to promote stronger business ties.

Cowen will also meet the Irish alumni and visit Penang where two renowned Irish medical schools are involved in the running of the medical colleges in Penang and Ipoh.

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