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Mahathir-Relations

KL COMMITTED TO IMPROVING TIES WITH STOCKHOLM, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

By: Jackson Sawatan

STOCKHOLM, Sept 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Kuala Lumpur is committed to improving ties with Stockholm.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a three-day visit to Sweden, said that bilateral relations between Malaysia and Sweden had been progressing over the years.

Speaking at an official luncheon hosted by Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson at his official residence here, Dr Mahathir said that tourism was a promising area for developing further bilateral cooperation between both countries.

"People-to-people contacts through tourism are an important aspect in promoting further understanding between our peoples. We are happy to note that Malaysia continues to be a popular destination for Swedish travellers," said the Prime Minister.

He said that visitors to Malaysia should not be alarmed by "the negative incidents in other South-East Asian countries. We assure you that Malaysia is a safe place for tourists."

Dr Mahathir earlier led the Malaysian delegation to a bilateral delegation meeting with his Swedish counterpart at the office of the Swedish Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir told the luncheon that both sides in the bilateral meeting had a fruitful exchange of views "on the state of our bilateral relations in which we reaffirm our desire to enhance cooperation between our two countries."

Dr Mahathir was pleased that the discussion had been very constructive and that both countries share many things in common, particularly on the fact that there existed great potential to further develop the scope and depth of the relations.

The Prime Minister noted that Sweden, being among the most successful European countries, had won worldwide recognition for its achievements in numerous fields such as information technology (IT), biotechnology, music and sports.

"I believe there is tremendous potential for cooperation between the two countries in the fields of biotechnology and IT. Malaysia's huge biodiversity should be attractive to Swedish research and development (R&D) institutions...Malaysia welcomes their participation," he said.

Malaysia and Sweden had worked closely together both at the bilateral and regional level and at various international fora, said Dr Mahathir.

"Exchanges of visits at various levels have further strengthened the ties of friendship between the two countries.

"The state visit by His Majesty King XVI Carl Gustaf and Her Majesty Queen Silvia to Malaysia in March 1996 has certainly brought much goodwill and understanding between the two countries.

"Malaysia is truly grateful for Sweden's acceptance of the forthcoming visit by His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia to Sweden in 2005," said the Prime Minister.

-- BERNAMA

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