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Mahathir-Turkey

MAKE TURKEY THE GATEWAY TO A BIGGER MARKET, PM TELLS PRIVATE SECTOR

PUTRAJAYA, June 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged the Malaysian private sector to make Turkey the gateway into the markets of European Union countries, West Asia and Central Asia.

The prime minister said they should take advantage of Turkey's unique and strategic position of lying between the Asian and European continents, which is an asset to the country.

He also invited companies from Turkey to use Malaysia as a base to enter the huge Asian market and to tap the opportunities provided by the Asean Free Trade Area (Afta).

"By being based in Malaysia, they can expand and seize the opportunities not only in the Asean market but also the world's largest market, that is China," he said at a dinner here tonight in honour of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is making a three-day visit to Malaysia from today.

Dr Mahathir said the Afta market, with a population of 400 million and combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$500 million, had vast trade potential that could benefit Turkish companies.

Dr Mahathir also suggested that positive measures be taken to reactivate the Malaysia-Turkey Business Chamber and Economic and Trade Joint Commission, which have not been very active for some time.

The two leaders also held a meeting at the Prime Minister's Department this afternoon.

According to Dr Mahathir, the talks had paved the way for both sides to reassess and identify the direction for enhancing bilateral ties.

He said bilateral trade in 2002 amounted to US\$270 million, with exports from Malaysia totalling US\$211 million.

"We have made efforts to increase investments and bilateral trade but a more concrete and sustained measure should be taken to realise the true potential of the many trade and business opportunities which have yet to be explored by both countries," he said.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir also recollected the sweet memories of his visits to Turkey in 1983, 1994, and again in 1997 to attend the D8 Summit, which Istanbul was hosting for the first time.

He said Turkey was not only rich in cultural values and customs but was also blessed with very beautiful and attractive landscapes and scenery.

He said Erdogan's visit would further strengthen the bridge of friendship between the two Islamic countries, whose capitals Kuala Lumpur and Ankara are twin cities.

-- BERNAMA
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