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Turkey-Bilateral

MALAYSIA AND TURKEY TO INCREASE BILATERAL TRADE

KUALA LUMPUR, June 14 (Bernama) -- Banking on the visit of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Malaysia, Turkey aims to increase bilateral trade between the two countries to US\$1 billion (RM3.8 billion) a year.

Erdogan said Turkey was seriously looking at ways to increase bilateral trade with Malaysia, which now hovers around US\$270 million, with exports from Malaysia totalling US\$211 million.

"The Malaysian Prime Minister (Datuk Seri) Dr Mahathir (Mohamad), at our meeting yesterday, said that he would like to see trade between the two countries reach the US\$1 billion mark, and we fully welcome this. We would like to see trade increase at the very first opportunity," he told a press conference here.

He said the primary goal, as far as business was concerned, was to boost trade between the two countries, and "if we follow this goal and work on it we would achieve it."

Erdogan arrived here yesterday for a three-day visit with a delegation which includes three ministers, nine Members of Parliament and 107 businessmen. He also met Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi this morning. He is scheduled to leave for Islamabad tomorrow morning.

Erdogan said his delegation had met with their Malaysian counterparts and efforts were underway to bolster trade between the two countries.

He said although relations between the two nations had been stagnant over the past decade, a new chapter had been opened with his visit.

"Over the last decade our relations were not so close for whatever reason I cannot figure out, but this is a new start to relations between Malaysia and Turkey...relations on the way to prosperity," Erdogan said.

He said Turkey not only wanted closer relations in terms of trade and economic matters, but also on subjects like arts and culture.

"We have also suggested that a joint commission between the two countries be set up, and this committee should be at the deputy prime minister level. This is to foster closer relations in economy, trade, culture and political strategy. This was also taken up by the Malaysian side," he added.

He said Abdullah had assured him that the country's policies and reforms would continue even after Dr Mahathir's resignation in October.

On Dr Mahathir's call yesterday that the Malaysia-Turkey Business Chamber play a more meaningful role in closing the trade disparity between the two nations, he said he agreed with the Prime Minister on this.

"I have spoken to the unions of the business chambers and they showed the same dedication and have promised to start work immediately. I have also instructed ministers travelling with me to get in touch with their Malaysian counterparts to create links," he said.

On international matters, Erdogan said he discussed with Dr Mahathir wide-ranging issues, including on Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan.

-- BERNAMA

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