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MAHATHIR-EXPORT

MAHATHIR HOPES CROCODILE SKIN WILL BE ANOTHER MAJOR EXPORT FOR M'SIA

KUALA LUMPUR, March 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hopes crocodile skin will become another major export for Malaysia as it fetches a very high premium in the international market.

He said this was evident especially when local companies, like Porosus Malaysia Sdn Bhd, have managed to tie up with world-renowned watchmaker, Audemars Piguet (AP), to produce straps from crocodile skin for the Swiss watch maker.

Porosus Malaysia has a crocodile farm in Langkawi and Sabah which produce crocodile skin products.

Dr Mahathir said this during a signing ceremony between Switzerland's watch maker AP and Porosus Malaysia which would jointly introduce a new class of products.

Also present at the ceremony was Porosus Malaysia's chairman, Datuk Khoo Than Choon.

He said Porosus Malaysia has promoted crocodile skin products quite successfully but it faced difficulty in dominating the watch straps market.

"I am glad that finally, a very well-known Swiss company like Audemars Piguet has decided to use watch straps produced by a crocodile farm in Langkawi.

"I am quite sure that these watch straps will be as strong as mentioned," he said.

Dr Mahathir said: "As usual, Malaysia is very happy whenever we can produce something that we can export and earn money for the country."

He said he hoped that the watch straps made from crocodile skin from Langkawi would become very popular.

"I am not here to promote the products of Porosus Malaysia or Datuk Khoo's business but apart from belts, he also makes very good shoes and bags.

"However, I must confess that this belt was given to me by him for free," he said.

Dr Mahathir said: "I could not afford to buy (the belt) because it is very expensive. Porosus's briefcase is valued at more than US\$4,000 (RM15,200)."

"I don't know why people pay such money for a briefcase, any paper bag would do just as well, now we have nice plastic cases which costs just a few dollars," he said in jest.

Dr Mahathir said that "there were some people who have more money than good sense" and perhaps (they) will be paying such prices for the bags and shoes.

"I am quite sure the watches would fetch quite a high price," he said.

However, he expressed the hope that both AP and Porosus's venture would be successful and that they would export large number of watches with crocodile skin straps.

"...because as usual, Malaysia believes in sharing with all the companies their profits and not their capital, when they sell something we get 28 percent (corporate tax)," he said.

As such, he said it was worthwhile for him to come all the way from Brazil to witness the signing ceremony. -- BERNAMA

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