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Abdullah-Expo

OIC EXPO CATALYST FOR INTRA-TRADE, ECONOMIC COOPERATION - ABDULLAH

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 15 (Bernama) -- The OIC Expo 2003, being held for the first time in conjunction with the 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit here is the best practical approach for intra-trade and economic cooperation among OIC member states, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

Likening the trade expo such as this to a "mobile bazaar", the Deputy Prime Minister said it could bring together businessmen, bankers and insurers together to exchange information and start business joint ventures to get goods and services from any member country.

"This is a very practical approach to start economic, trade and investment collaborations among OIC member states on a big, serious and effective way," he told reporters after visiting the expo.

Earlier, Abdullah spent three hours visiting almost all the 600 companies from 27 OIC member and non-member countries showcasing their products at the expo.

The six-day expo was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.

Organised by FR Exhibition and Conference Sdn Bhd, the expo covered 26,976 sq metres, equivalent to about five football fields, at Precinct 5.

It has earned a mention in the Malaysia Book of Records as the biggest ever expo to be held in Malaysia.

Malaysia is hosting the OIC Summit being held for the first time in Asia. Heads of State and Government will start their two-day meeting tomorrow.

Expressing his delight on the expo, Abdullah said OIC member countries should start working on intra-trade and economic collaborations among them without waiting for a system or a plan to forge such initiatives.

"When we have started such collaborations, they can be expanded. This will benefit all OIC member countries.

"I really hope this will be the beginning of a new development in the OIC cooperation.

"This will bring a lot of changes to the OIC and the Ummah," he said.

Abdullah said he was happy that the expo not only showcased goods and services from OIC member countries but also on the courses and studies offered by local tertiary learning institutions.

He also expressed the hope that more countries would support the use of gold dinars in place of the US dollar for trade transactions among OIC members.

Earlier, Abdullah launched the "Mecca Cola" soft drink, an alternative to Coca-Cola produced by an American company.

Marketed worldwide, Mecca Cola is produced in Paris as an option to the international community, especially Muslims, and as a competitor to other soft drinks produced in the US.

Asked on the use of gold dinars in trade transactions among member states in place of the US currency as proposed by Malaysia, he said the idea had started to receive encouraging response from member countries.

He said the expo which also showcased gold dinars would rekindle interest among OIC member country leaders to support the initiative.

I've always said seeing is believing. When they see the dinars, it will open their minds to support the use of dinars.

"We hope one day gold dinars can be used to pay for the goods and

services traded in OIC countries," he said.

The gold dinar promotion is being carried out by Dinar and Dirham International, one of the four main sponsors of the expo.

He said: "We should not wait till all the OIC member countries used the gold dinars but instead it can be started and popularised by a few countries first."

At the function, Abdullah presented "Malaysia Book of Records" certificate to F&R Exhibition and Conference Chairman Tan Sri Abu Bakar Jamal in recognition of the company's success in hosting the biggest trade expo in Malaysia.

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