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Mahathir-Brazil

PROMOTE INTENSIVE M'SIA-BRAZIL CONTACT AND INTERACTION, SAYS MAHATHIR

By: Mokhtar Hussain

BRASILIA, March 17 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that there is a need to promote more intensive contact and interaction between Malaysia and Brazil, not only between government and business leaders but scientists, sportsmen and youth as well.

The prime minister said that there was tremendous potential for cooperation by taking advantage of both countries' respective strength and experience.

"Both countries need to sustain high level visits and promote more intensive contact and interaction between our peoples, especially between the government and business leaders, scientists, sportsmen and youth," he said in his speech at a luncheon hosted by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva at the Itamaraty Palace here.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, is in Brazil's capital for a two-day official visit at the invitation of the Brazilian president.

Outlining the prospects of closer Malaysia-Brazil ties, Dr Mahathir said that new areas of cooperation could be in information technology, biotechnology, space technology, aerospace, hydro power generation and agricultural research.

On sports and youth, the prime minister said that Malaysians were happy that in May last year, the Brazilian football team had chosen Kuala Lumpur to acclimatise themselves before the World Cup tournament in South Korea and Japan.

"The friendly football match played between the Malaysian and the Brazilian teams in Kuala Lumpur contributed to the greater consciousness and awareness of our two countries among our youth," he said.

The "samba team" then went on to win the World Cup for the fifth time.

On bilateral trade, Dr Mahathir hoped that his visit would generate greater flow of trade and investment between Malaysia and Brazil.

He said that Malaysian and Brazilian businessmen should be encouraged to seek opportunities in each other's country.

"I am pleased to observe that the Malaysia-Brazil Business Council was established two years ago and the members of this council include big Brazilian corporations like Avibras and Embraer," he said.

He also expressed satisfaction that there were some Malaysian investments in Brazil, namely in the states of Amazonia, Para, Sao Paulo and in Parana. The companies have invested in the timber complex and in the manufacturing of rubber gloves and security seals.

Dr Mahathir said that as emerging economies with almost similar level of economic development, Malaysia and Brazil have much to gain from closer economic and technology cooperation.

Brazil continues to be Malaysia's largest trading partner in South America with bilateral trade last year registered at US\$639 as against US\$514 million in 2001.

On international issues, Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia believed that there should be no unilateral approach to international issues disrupting the international peace and security.

"We strongly believe that problems should be resolved peacefully under the aegis of the United Nations and countries should not resort to war," he said.

The prime minister also commended the president on the benevolent

policies and projects including the Zero Hunger programme being undertaken since he took office last Jan 1.

Earlier, he was ushered to meet the newly-elected president before both leaders proceeded to attend a delegation meeting.

The Malaysian delegation includes Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Dr Leo Michael Toyad and Foreign Ministry Deputy Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Aziz Mohammed.

Later, the prime minister exchanged gifts with President Lula.

Tomorrow, Dr Mahathir and his wife will tour the Embraer aircraft manufacturing plant and the Avibras Aerospacial in San Jose near Sao Paolo.

They will stay overnight in Rio de Janeiro before leaving for home via Buenos Aires the following day.

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