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Mahathir-Russia

DR M: M'SIA KEEN TO ACT AS SPRINGBOARD FOR RUSSIAN GOODS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 5 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is very interested to act as a "springboard" for Russian goods into the region, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"We are very keen to become the gateway for Russian products in the region," he said during a question-and-answer session at the Malaysia-Russia Business Forum, here.

Present was visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Trade between Malaysia and Russia is currently limited, Dr Mahathir said, adding that Malaysia imported steel, aircraft and other related products from Russia, while very few Malaysian products made it to Russia, despite the country's wide range of exports.

He said bilateral trade should be fair as much as possible and at the same time, there should be a balance.

As such, it was important that both countries knew what each has to offer, he said.

Dr Mahathir said such information was crucial at the moment, especially since many Malaysian products reach Russia through third parties.

One way of tackling this was to have more visits and contacts by businessmen of both countries, he said.

The visits would allow better understanding and help cement relations and enhance business between Malaysia and Russia, he said.

Dr Mahathir also told the forum that at one stage, Malaysia exported automobiles to Russia but due to some problems, the deal was terminated.

In jest, Dr Mahathir said: "We think the Russians don't use many cars as they should."

Expecting a high potential of motor vehicle sales in Russia, Dr Mahathir proposed the setting up of an automotive joint venture assembly in that country.

He said bilateral trade did not just involve buying and selling but also the transfer of technology.

"When we have more trade, it is inevitable that the exchange of knowledge will be enhanced.

"We believe Russia has sufficient scientific and technological know-how which Malaysia desires to have," he added.

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