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MAHATHIR-RUSSIA

M'SIA KEEN TO ACT AS SPRINGBOARD FOR RUSSIAN GOODS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

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

"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 today.

Also present was visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Dr Mahathir said that trade between Malaysia and Russia is currently limited where Malaysia buys some steel, aircraft and other related products from Russia.

On the other hand, very few Malaysian products made it to Russia, despite the country's wide range of exports, Dr Mahathir said.

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

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

The Prime Minister said that 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 to cement relations and thus, enhanced business between Malaysia and Russia, he added.

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, the Prime Minister said: "We think the Russians don't use many cars as they should."

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

He also said that 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. -- BERNAMA

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