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MAHATHIR-TRADE

M'SIA TO CONCENTRATE ON ELECTRONIC & HOUSEHOLD EXPORTS TO UKRAINE

By: Mohd Kamel Othman

YALTA (Ukraine), July 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will concentrate on exporting electronic products, household products, machines, fabricated steel products, cranes and palm oil to Ukraine in view of their strong market potential here, says Prime Minister Datu Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said Ukraine's strategic location in the Black Sea as well as its major port of Odessa would enable Malaysian products to be marketed to the former members of the Commonwealth of Independent States as well as East European nations.

"We have come here to get to know them better besides expanding trade in new markets," he told Malaysian journalists at the Government Guest House here on Wednesday.

Dr Mahathir is now on a four-day visit to Ukraine which began on Sunday. He will leave for home late Wednesday from the Simferopol International Airport.

Asked on the perception that Malaysia was now looking towards the Eastern European bloc, the prime minister said Malaysia had always maintained good relations with all countries because she was a trading nation and new markets had to be explored always.

Dr Mahathir said Ukraine previously did not buy from abroad because it had a closed market and Malaysia also did not concentrate on the Eastern European countries because their markets were also closed.

"Previously they did not have foreign exchange from abroad but now that they have accepted the open market system, they are now prepared to buy and sell products."

Dr Mahathir said this meant that there was a good opportunity for Malaysia to penetrate Eastern European markets which were once closed.

He also said the Eastern European bloc now was unlike the old days when it concentrated on designing and producing weapons as nations in the area were also fighting one another then.

This led to East European nations to be not-so-good in producing consumer goods but defence products, the prime minister said.

On the capability of Malaysia's corporate sector in working with its counterparts in Eastern Europe, Dr Mahathir said Malaysian entrepreneurs were now prepared to go anywhere to have business partnerships.

"Our people are now different from the old days, they are prepared to go anywhere (for joint ventures)."

Dr Mahathir also revealed that the Malaysian government would undertake a study on institutions of higher learning in Ukraine which have taken in Malaysian students.

"These students did not take into account whether their academic qualifications would be accepted back home or not. They come here first and when they have passed they will use pressure via their political channels in asking the government to recognise their qualifications. They are taking risks here," Dr Mahathir said. -- BERNAMA

MKO MAD SHY