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KL to consider missions to Brazil for trade, investment

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SAN JOSE (Brazil), Tues: Malaysia will consider sending trade delegations

to Brazil to further increase bilateral trade and investments, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

There is tremendous potential for cooperation, given the advantage of our respective strengths and experiences. Both countries have much to gain

from closer economic and technological cooperation.

Dr Mahathir said during an official visit to Brazil, his second to the Latin American country, that Malaysia will also encourage greater Brazilian investment.

The visit is at the invitation of Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

"We will meet the investors and talk to them about opportunities in Malaysia.

"I'm quite sure that if we make positive efforts, there will be some people who would be able to invest in Malaysia," he said in reply to a question during a press conference.

Brazil is currently Malaysia's largest trading partner in South America.

However, two-way trade constitutes only a small percentage of the total trade volume.

Last year, two-way trade stood at US\$639 million (US\$1 = RM3.80) against US\$514 million in 2001.

Malaysia has some investments in Brazil, namely in Amazonia, Para, Sao Paulo and Parana. The investments range from a timber complex to rubber gloves and security seals.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir visited two Brazilian manufacturing plants: Embraer, which manufactures aircraft, and Avibras, which produces rockets and guided missiles.

Avibras has supplied Malaysia with rocket launchers and the Prime Minister said he was curious to know their capability.

"I must say I'm very impressed they seem to have very sophisticated technology comparable with the others that I've seen elsewhere."

He said the visit had been "very good, worthwhile, had good discussions with President Lula and we are of the same view (on a number of issues) and that is good to know".

Both the leaders agree that there should be no unilateral approach to international issues disrupting world peace and security.

"We think that we can enhance relations between Brazil and Malaysia and increase our trade. I believe there is wide scope for increasing our trade.

"We need to identify more things that we can buy from Brazil, not just

military equipment but other things as well," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister, who also visited the Amazon, said it is a "very interesting place and where Malaysia got the first rubber trees, even though they came through Kew Gardens in England. It is interesting to see

natural rubber trees growing in the jungle".

"While we think that Brazil is very far away from Malaysia, there might

be things of some interest for Malaysian tourists to visit Brazil," he added.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, led a 37-member delegation on his official visit to Brazil.

Among those in the delegation are Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Dr Leo Michael Toyad, the Foreign Ministry's deputy secretary-general Datuk Abdul

Aziz Mohamad and the Malaysian Ambassador to Brazil Tai Kat Meng.