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Malaysia attracting Finnish companies

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Malaysia is fast becoming a base for operations by Finnish companies interested in expanding into the Asean region, Finnish ambassador to Malaysia, Unto Turunen, said today.

This was primarily due to the healthy investment climate in the country, besides the excellent infrastructure which enabled the efficient export of goods, he said.

"It is becoming more important for several Finnish companies as a base for operations in this region. I hope this trend will continue in the future when the Asean Free Trade Area comes into play," he said in an interview.

Turunen said trade conditions under Afta might be reflected in the strategies of Finnish companies intending to invest in Asean nations.

"I think the Malaysian Government has been doing a good job promoting investments in the country," he said.

Turunen said Finnish companies appreciated the investment climate in Malaysia which made their business ventures viable.

"Malaysia is a success story with a very good record in development. The infrastructure and transparent legislation are quite attractive to these companies. On the whole, it has a very impressive story to tell."

While there were about 50 Finnish companies physically present in the country, the bilateral trade relationship went beyond this to Finnish and Malaysian companies dealing from their respective sides, he said.

Malaysian exports to Finland last year totalled nearly RM1 billion, involving mostly electronic equipment, with Finland exporting about RM520 million mostly in electronic and telecommunication equipment and printing and packaging products.

Turunen feels that Malaysia's attraction as an investment centre is linked to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's leadership and policies.

"He has had a direct role by setting goals for Malaysia. Vision 2020 is very important in guiding the development of the country. He has also been very active in emphasising education."

He said Dr Mahathir had almost brought about "a revolution in telecommunications" with the right type of policies and implementation style.

Another potential area for future development was the field of bio-technology which would require extensive investment, he said.

Finnish companies would be interested in research and development of bio-technology, he said, adding that this was a field which could see Finnish-Malaysian co-operation.

On Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is expected to take over as Prime Minister in October, he said Malaysians could be assured of a dedicated leader.