

**M'sia to reverse drop in trade with US**  
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Malaysia hopes its trade with the United States will soon return to the high levels of previous years after being badly affected by the global economic crisis.

Seeking to woo more investments, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak drew the attention of the United States-Asean Business Council (USABC) to recent reforms in Malaysia's economic policies to transit from a middle-income to high-income growth.

"To achieve this, we will be pursuing an economic policy that will be more open, more merit-based and more supportive of entrepreneurship and innovation.

"Abroad, we will continue to try to engage more actively with our trading partners," he said at a dinner hosted by USABC on Tuesday.

In 2006, Malaysia was the United States's 10th largest trading partner but last year, it dropped to 18th place as trade volume shrunk 23 per cent from 2008 to 2009.

Najib also hoped the high level of American investments in Malaysia, which totalled US\$13.5 billion last year and created jobs for 158,000 people, would continue in the years to come.

He also said in recent times, a number of Malaysian companies were seeking to develop a presence in the United States and the trend should be welcomed by all parties.

"Some have set up branch offices here, others have bought into your real estate and a few others have become joint venture partners with US firms," he added.

While their numbers were small and investments modest for now, Najib said it was exciting as Malaysian companies had reached a level of maturity and confidence to venture abroad in a substantive way.

The Prime minister also urged the United States not to retreat but continue to engage the rest of the world as it fights the economic crisis.

Najib said countries which did business with America were anxious to see if the world's biggest economy would carry out a change of policies in rebuilding itself.

He said questions had been asked if the United States would depend more on domestic consumption and less on export-driven growth or whether the untrammelled pursuit of trade had exposed the US to unacceptable risks.

"It is my hope, of course, that the United States will resolve this question in a way that addresses its national interest without sacrificing that of the rest of the world," he said.

Najib said in the globalised world, it would be a folly for any country, even one as dominant and powerful as the US, to think it could do better by going it alone.

He urged the United States to share and help other nations grow and develop to generate a more prosperous world and a more prosperous America.

Earlier yesterday, the prime minister met Congressmen Howard Berman, Chairman of the

foreign affairs committee, who also hosted Najib to lunch on Capitol Hill.

Najib also had discussions with Senator John Kerry, Chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee and Senator Jim Webb of Virginia.

Acting Foreign Minister Rais Yatim told Malaysian journalists the Prime minister's intention to forge closer ties between Malaysia and the United States had caught the attention of three senators and congressmen.

They encouraged that relations between congressmen and several senate institutions of both countries be enhanced further and result in positive outcomes for both, said Rais who is also information, communications and culture minister.

- Bernama

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