

PM's visit to emphasise trade

27/05/04 NST 3

■ **From Hardev Kaur in Beijing**
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THE Prime Minister's visit to China this week has a strong trade flavour to it, a reflection of Beijing's growing economic clout.

During the five-day visit, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will witness the signing of at least 33 memorandums of understanding (MOUs), hold discussions with nine international investor bankers and declare open a trade show "Showcase Malaysia in China 2004".

He will also officiate the Malaysia-China Business dialogue, attend the Malaysia-China business forum and outline his views on "Business Opportunities in Malaysia and China".

More than 80 Malaysian companies will take part in Showcase Malaysia.

It is organised by Matrade in co-operation with Tourism Ministry.

The business dialogue has attracted some 600 Chinese participants.

The political and social aspects of the bilateral relations will also focus prominently during the visit which is at the invitation of the Chinese Government. It also marks 30 years of Malaysia-China diplomatic relations.

Abdullah leads a high level delegation comprising nine Cabinet Ministers, one Chief Minister and two Menteri Besar.

In addition, there is a sizeable business and private sector delegation.

Malaysia's Ambassador to Beijing, Datuk Abdul Majid Khan, said JP Morgan are among the bankers and fund managers who will meet Abdullah.

While there is no specific agenda for

the breakfast meeting, the Prime Minister is expected to brief them on his policy initiatives and moves to reform the corporate sector including the Government-linked companies (GLCs).

Abdullah will be given an official welcome at the Great Hall of the People here. This will be followed by bilateral talks with the Chinese delegation led by Prime Minister Wen Jiabao.

Discussions will focus on bilateral, regional and international issues. The PM will also pay a courtesy call on President Hu Jintao.

He will open the new Malaysian chancery in Beijing. In Shanghai, he will meet bankers and attend a business dialogue organised by Petronas. He is also scheduled to be briefed on the development of Shanghai.

Majid told the Malaysian media

that Abdullah was credited for bringing China in as Asean's dialogue partner when he was Foreign Minister, and the Chinese leadership is very appreciative of this.

Malaysia was the first country in Southeast Asia to establish diplomatic relations and this at a time when there were doubts and reservations about engaging China.

Tourism is on the rise.

Last year about half a million Chinese visited Malaysia and a similar number of Malaysians went to China.

To improve travel by Chinese nationals, the Malaysian consul in Shanghai has introduced I-visa applications — the application and processing of the visa can be done on the Internet. The scheme, which is being tested out in Shanghai, will be extended to other regions, he said.

On the trade front, bilateral trade between 1990 and 2003 grew at an annual rate of 24 per cent increasing from US\$1.18 billion (RM4.48 billion) in 1990 to US\$13.2 billion (RM50.16 billion) in 2003.

Currently, China ranks as Malaysia's fourth largest trading partner.

Among Ministers accompanying Abdullah are Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar; Minister of Housing and Local Government Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting; Minister of Works Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu; Minister of Energy, Water and Communications Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik; Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz; Minister of Agriculture Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Minister of Science, Technology and Multimedia Datuk Jamaluddin Jarjis.



ABDUL MAJID: Ambassador