

Malaysia must enhance visibility in major European markets - Mustapa



Mustapa says as the Netherlands continues to position itself as a global knowledge economy, there are abundant opportunities for Malaysia to attract new investments from the country. - Filepic

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's trade and investment mission to Europe, led by International Trade and Industry Minister, Datuk Seri Mustapa

Mohamed, continues to Amsterdam in the Netherlands and Brussels, Belgium, engaging leading companies and potential investors especially in targeted growth areas in innovation and services sectors.

"It is important for Malaysia to be strongly on the radar screen of European multinationals and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). To achieve this objective, we must enhance our visibility in the major trade and investment markets.

"We need to engage with them at least once a year to update on our latest economic developments, business opportunities and attractiveness of Malaysia as a premier investment destination," said Mustapa in a statement on Saturday.

There was strong interest in the Malaysian economy within the Dutch business community and many were leveraging Malaysia's strategic position as their gateway to ASEAN, Mustapa said on the mission that was held from Oct 19-20, 2017.

As of 2016, some 249 projects with the participation of Dutch companies valued at RM21.6 billion had been implemented in Malaysia, making the Netherlands the country's second largest investor from the European Union (EU), behind Germany.

"These investments are in key sectors such as electronics and electrical (EE), food manufacturing, and scientific equipment. There are about 150 Dutch companies operating in Malaysia which include Shell, Dutch Lady, Vopak and NXP Semiconductor," said Mustapa.

- Besides the RM2.6 billion Global Business Services Centre established by Shell in Kuala Lumpur which employs over 1,700 people, a number of Dutch companies have chosen Malaysia to set up their regional establishments including Benchmark Electronics, Mylaps BV and Kraton Polymers.
- During the seminar, two Dutch SMEs, namely BE Semiconductor Industries (BESI) and Enza Zaden shared their overall positive experiences investing in Malaysia as well as their own perspective on the human capital capacity in Malaysia.

Among others, both companies noted the high-quality human capital available in Malaysia especially in the area of technology and mechanisation and the strong work culture among Malaysians.

BESI, based in Shah Alam, Selangor and employs 430 employees, is involved in the production of semiconductor related machinery and equipment, and has continued making Malaysia its regional base to serve the Asia Pacific market.

Enza Zaden, which produces agricultural seeds, has chosen Perak for its research and development and highland breeding centre, which has been accorded the BioNexus status.

“As the Netherlands continues to position itself as a global knowledge economy, there are abundant opportunities for Malaysia to attract new investments from the country especially in new economic areas such as renewables, biomass, startups and Internet Of Things.

"Malaysia is currently in an exciting phase of development with major initiatives in areas such as digital economy. This development presents new business opportunities for Dutch companies especially in innovative-driven and service-based sectors," added Mustapa.

For example, the Dutch Palmares consortium that consists of several companies in the field of renewable energy such as **EnergyTransformers** and DMT Technology, are looking at opportunities in Malaysia in the treatment of palm oil waste.

In addition, a scale-up Dutch company, Saleduck, is involved in e-commerce (e-couponing) in Malaysia while other scale-ups such as Poet Farmer and Lizard Apps are engaged in the development of applications.

Leading SMEs such as KMWE which produces precision systems and components for the semiconductor industry have also thrived in Malaysia, growing from 11 employees in 2009 to 200 workers in 2017, said Mustapa.

KMWE, he said, had plans to further expand its operations in Malaysia including in the aerospace sector.

Mustapa also took the opportunity to visit Brainport Industries Campus in Eindhoven which is a high-tech centre in the Netherlands with more than 140 companies and institutes, and some 10,000 researchers, developers and entrepreneurs working on developing future technologies and products.

The high-tech centre has been at the forefront of new areas of research including integrated photonics, artificial intelligence and virtual intelligence.

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry is organising a seminar in Malaysia with the support of Brainport High-Tech Campus in early 2018 to create awareness on the success of the Triple Helix framework in ensuring the competitiveness of the Dutch

- The trade mission continued with a roundtable meeting involving 10 leading Belgian companies in Brussels.

As of June 2017, Belgian investments worth RM743.6 million had been implemented in Malaysia, making Belgium as one of the significant investors from the EU.

These investments had created over 2,000 employment opportunities in key sectors such as non-metallic mineral products, chemicals and EE.

Among the major companies that have set their footprints in Malaysia are Lhoist Chemicals, Oleon and Melexis.

Some of the Belgian companies which have existing operations in Malaysia are exploring to expand their production capacity to leverage Malaysia's strategic position as the gateway to ASEAN.

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