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Mahathir-memorandum

DR MAHATHIR WITNESSES SIGNING OF HOUSING PACT

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between a Malaysian and an American consortium to undertake a housing and infrastructure project in South Africa.

The Malaysian companies led by Taliworks (Oversea) Sdn Bhd will participate in the construction of low- to medium-cost houses, complete with infrastructural facilities.

It will also help create new townships, apart from expanding existing ones.

The American consortium, headed by Black & Veatch International Company, will be responsible for the drawing up of a masterplan of the township and housing development besides providing financial backing and participating in power generation projects.

Speaking to reporters after the ceremony, the prime minister said he was very happy that American and Malaysian companies had come together to work in South Africa.

"We have always stressed that in our relationship with South Africa we would contribute to solving some of their social, economic and even political problems," he said. -- more

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He said the situation in South Africa was not unlike that in Malaysia and there was a need to restructure society and to bring in everybody so that each one would have a share in the wealth of the country.

"I think this is an area that Malaysians are conversant with," he said adding that Malaysia could help to resolve problems on inequitable racial development in South Africa.

Dr Mahathir said he was quite sure the Malaysian and the American companies involved in the project were aware of the problems and would implement their projects with due regard to the situation in South Africa.

On the opening of a mission in South Africa, he said Wisma Putra had sent a representative there.

The MOU was signed by Taliworks chairman, Datuk Mohamed Hussaini Abdul Jamil and Black & Veatch Asia Pacific managing director and regional executive, Howard A. Russel.

Works Minister Datuk Leo Moggie, who was present, said Taliworks had some experience in civil and construction works, particularly in water development.

"However, their involvement in the MOU now is only at the conceptual stage and it is intended that a consortium of various Malaysian companies will participate when the whole project becomes more concrete later on.

"The idea now is to have a framework that can work together with a group of American companies so that we can work out the details and the involvement of other potential companies will be determined at a later date," he said.

Hussaini told reporters the project was the result of Dr Mahathir's advice to Malaysian companies to develop South-South cooperation and also a follow-up to his talks with US President Bill Clinton on the matter. --

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