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PM-Agreements

DR M ARRIVES IN KAZAKHSTAN, THREE ACCORDS SIGNED

By: Rachman Nordin

ALMATY, July 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad began a three-day official visit to Kazakhstan today, pledging assistance to the republic to build a new capital city and to train Kazakhstan economists in Malaysia.

Following talks with President Nursultan Nazarbayev after a welcoming ceremony at the Presidential office, Dr Mahathir and his host signed a joint declaration on bilateral cooperation and witnessed the signing of two agreements, one on aviation services and the other on banking.

At a joint session with the media immediately after that, Nazarbayev said Kazakhstan wanted to share Malaysia's experience, especially in dealing with four aspects of national development.

Firstly, it wants to learn from Malaysia's experience in social development in a multi-racial society and, secondly, its success in becoming a major producer of commodities as well as manufactured items.

Thirdly, Malaysia's approach to market reforms and liberalisation of the economy was also relevant to Kazakhstan's current development needs, he said.

Fourthly, his country would want to incorporate the most positive elements in Malaysia's long-term development plans, especially the vision to be an industrialised nation by the year 2020.

The Kazakhstan president also hoped Dr Mahathir would give his personal attention to a US\$800 million hydroelectric project which a Malaysian company has signed a deal to undertake its construction.

Nazarbayev also proposed that Malaysia employ Kazakhstan workers to help overcome the labour shortage in Malaysia.

On his part, Dr Mahathir invited Kazakhstan's technocrats to Malaysia to study how Malaysia is undertaking the construction of a new administrative capital outside Kuala Lumpur.

"Malaysia's own experience in financing the project will be useful to Kazakhstan," he said.

At the same time, Dr Mahathir said he would encourage Malaysian businessmen to look into the design of the proposed new capital for Kazakhstan in Akmolay, about 1,000km from the present capital Almaty.

Replying to questions from the Kazakhstan media, Dr Mahathir said while Asean recognised the major role Kazakhstan played in confidence-building in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Malaysia would have to consult the other Asean members -- Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam - on Kazakhstan's desire to join the Asean Regional Forum.

Meanwhile, when briefing Malaysian journalists later, Deputy Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry Datuk Abdul Halim Ali said during their discussion the two leaders identified 100 projects where Malaysian companies can take part in Kazakhstan.

According to him, Kazakhstan invited Malaysian companies to invest in the manufacturing of jewellery to take advantage of Kazakhstan's abundant mineral deposits, especially gold.

The Malaysia-Kazakhstan aviation services agreement was signed by Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and Yuri Lourilenko, the Kazakhstan Minister of Transport and Communications.

Deputy Governor of Bank Negara Fong Weng Phak and his Kazakhstan counterpart Kadyrzhan Damitov signed the MoU on banking which sets the

basis for wide-ranging areas of cooperation in that field, including personnel training.

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