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Mahathir-Conte

GUINEAN PRESIDENT FORSEES GREATER DYNAMISM IN TIES WITH MALAYSIA

By: Rachman Nordin

CONAKRY, Nov 6 (Bernama) -- Guinean President Lansana Conte today told visiting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that he forsees a stronger bond of partnership with Malaysia to be characterised by greater dynamism and pragmatism.

Speaking in French, at the Palace of Nation here, Conte hoped Dr Mahathir's visit "will bring about greater success in relations between both countries based on the spirit of dynamism, pragmatism and willingness to foster cooperation in new areas of partnership targetting priority sectors".

"I am optimistic that Dr Mahathir's visit and working sessions of the officials will bring out results that will lead to the modernisation of the Guinean economy and the agriculture sector in particular," he said at the outset of talks between the Guinean and Malaysian delegations.

In response, Dr Mahathir said having gone through a similar difficult phase of nation building that Guinea was experiencing now, Malaysia was able to appreciate Guinea's problems and believed that the Malaysian experience was relevant to Guinea.

"We have gone through this process before and we have not forgotten the manner we overcame the difficulties. We look forward to sharing with you Malaysia's experience in overcoming the difficulties," he said.

Later, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi led the Malaysian delegation, which also included Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha, to the talks with their Guinean counterpart.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir and Conte held a one-to-one meeting at the same venue preceded by a seperate discussion with his Guinean counterpart Sidya Toure at the latter's office.

Speaking through a translator, Toure told Dr Mahathir that Guinea was undergoing a difficult phase of striving to reduce a budget deficit from eight per cent to 6.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product and towards this, hoped to reach a deal for assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by January next year.

Guinea, a former French colony of seven million people comprising more than three major tribal groups, also look forward to emulate Malaysia in achieving multiracial unity and promoting more market economy reforms, he said.

Dr Mahathir assured Toure that to help Guinea, Malaysia would not hesitate in transferring Malaysian technology in certain fields that Malaysia has excelled in provided there was political stability and proper legal framework.

He told Toure: "We see no reason why Guinea cannot do well if it has these two conditions. Malaysia has succeeded because we have political stability and the proper legal framework."

Malaysia would not hesitate to expose to Guinea "all that we have done for our development but perhaps not everything can be used", Dr Mahathir said.

Nonetheless, Dr Mahathir believes that some of the procedures that Malaysia had adopted for its development could be applied to Guinea.

Hectic schedules are a normal feature of Dr Mahathir's official visits elsewhere and the second day of his itinerary here was no exception.

After talks with Conte and Toure, his schedule today included the

launching of the International Commercial Bank -- a Malaysian venture licenced last September by the Guinean Central Bank to offer full banking services with a paid-up capital of US\$2 million (RM5 million) -- and a luncheon address to a Malaysia-Guinea business seminar.

Dr Mahathir also witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding involving Malaysia's Business Focus Sdn Berhad's purchase and refurbishment of the Grand Unity Hotel, initially to cost US100 million (RM250 million).

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