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Mahathir-Talks

MALAYSIA SIGNS ACCORDS AS PM ENDS VISIT TO GHANA

By: Rachman Nordin

ACCRA (Ghana), Nov 11 (Bernama) -- The signing of a bilateral and three private sector agreements and the presentation of a Proton Wira car to Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings marked the conclusion of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's four-day official visit to Ghana today.

An aide of the Prime Minister said that from here Dr Mahathir will leave for French Guiana to witness the launching of Malaysia's second satellite in Kourou as scheduled although an earlier report from Paris said he was advised against going there because of a local labour unrest.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha were among 30 senior Malaysian officials who took part in the Ghana-Malaysia bilateral talks prior to the signing of the agreements.

The bilateral agreement concerned the promotion and protection of investment while the separate private sector accords were on the development of an export processing zone, selected highways and mineral exploration in Ghana by Malaysian companies.

Dr Mahathir and Rawlings later held a joint news conference.

Ghana was the second leg of Dr Mahathir's week-long official tour of two West African states starting with Guinea last Tuesday.

Meanwhile, speaking at the state banquet in honour of Dr Mahathir here last night, Rawlings listed at length some of the concrete results of Ghanaian investment promotion efforts in Malaysia.

Rawlings said he did so because "some cynics have questioned the value of our promotional tours, portraying them as mere junkets and asking 'so where are the investors?'".

He said the answer to that question was that investors were coming steadily from the United States, Europe and Asia, notably Malaysia, with many already in productive and profitable business.

He said during this visit alone Dr Mahathir formally commissioned four new ventures including two banks and a shipyard cum dry-dock which would become a major marine engineering facility to make Ghana a gateway to the West African sub-region.

Rawlings commended Malaysian investors for the humane element they brought along with their investment in that no Ghanaian employee of companies privatised to them would lose his position.

He gave the assurance that his government would maintain and enhance the favourable investment climate so that direct investment could accelerate Ghana's pace of economic growth, provide more employment and increase incomes.

Rawlings said although since 1984 Ghana's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) has grown at an average rate of five per cent, his country was not satisfied with such pace of growth as it barely kept ahead of the country's high population growth.

Ghana's population grew at about three per cent last year and now stood at 17.8 million. -- BERNAMA

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