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Mahathir-Agreements

MALAYSIAN VENTURE SETS TO MAKE GUINEA'S TELECOMS BEST IN WEST AFRICA

By: Rachman Nordin

CONAKRY, Nov 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today witnessed the signing of an agreement involving Telekom Malaysia Berhad which sets out to help make Guinea's telecommunications facilities the best in West Africa within three years.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, is on the third of a four-day official visit here.

Although brief, the signing ceremony bore great significance in that it marked Telekom Malaysia's pioneering effort in West Africa to modernise Guinea's telecommunications system which has been derelict for the past three decades.

Dr Mahathir witnessed Sotelgui (Socite Telecommunication de Guinea), in which Telecom Malaysia has a 60 per cent stake, signed the agreement with Pulau Pinang-based Alcatel Network Systems (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd.

Malaysian officials said the agreement covers the supply, delivery and commissioning of an international telephone exchange and related services for Sotelgui in a deal costing US\$1 million (RM2.5 million).

They said the agreement also meant provision of an additional 2,000 trunk circuits to boost Guinea's international telecommunications facility.

Telekom Malaysia's stake in Sotelgui amounts to an investment of US\$45 million (RM112.5 million) while the Guinean government's 40 per cent share in the newly privatised company is in the form of its assets. Telekom Malaysia first ventured into the country in March this year.

Sotelgui-Alcatel agreement signing in the morning is one of three private sector accords and Memorandum of Understanding which Dr Mahathir witnessed today.

At a separate function later today, Dr Mahathir also witnessed the signing of an agreement between Padi Beras Nasional Berhad and the Guinean government to set up a company to develop the country's rice industry with a start-up investment of US\$3.4 million (RM8.5 million) with Bernas holding 80 per cent of the stake and the rest by the Guinean government.

Bernas will introduce modern padi farming and rice milling on a 1,800-hectare site in Monchon, about 200km from here.

After calling on Speaker of the Guinean Parliament Boubacar Diallo, Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah were entertained to a private luncheon by President Lansana Conte at the President's orchard in Dubreka, 45km from here. --BERNAMA

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