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Mahathir-banquet

DR M: NOW TIME TO EXPAND SCOPE OF GHANA-M'SIA COOPERATION

By: Rachman Nordin

ACCRA (Ghana), Nov 10 (Bernama) -- Malaysia, which has so far trained 45 Ghanaians under a modest technical aid programme started in 1981, will continue to help Ghana in economic planning and management and implementation of economic reforms, visiting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

It was now time for Ghana and Malaysia, both former British colonies which became independent in 1957, to expand the scope of their cooperation beyond their common membership in the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations (UN), he said.

"For many years, we have been able to work together within these organisations in the common search for more equitable and better world for our people. There is much our two countries can do for each other in sharing what we do best," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who concludes a four-day official visit here Monday, was speaking at a State banquet held in his honour by President Jerry Rawlings.

Madame Nana Rawlings and Datin Seri Dr Sti Hasmah were present.

Dr Mahathir said although economic interaction between Ghana and Malaysia had not realised its full potential, Ghana's abundant natural resources and Malaysia's experience in industrial production should enable them to complement each other in many areas.

"Given the present trend towards globalisation, countries must constantly seek new partnerships and linkages to remain competitive," Dr Mahathir said.

Ghana is rich in resources including diamond, bauxite and timber and its ashanti goldmine is the largest in the world.

Dr Mahathir expressed optimism that because President Rawlings had already put in place the right strategy and the necessary policies, Ghana was now at a crucial stage when it would take off economically just as Malaysia did.

He said Ghana had succeeded in stimulating economic growth by introducing a "business-friendly" new investment code, establishing free trade zones and formulating a Vision 2020 to guide the country towards becoming a medium-income nation.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had to face many difficulties in its progress towards economic independence and that its economic success had largely freed Malaysia from the kind of economic arm-twisting by powerful nations.

He commended Rawlings for Ghana's role in promoting peace and stability in West Africa including by twice being past chairman of the Economic Community of West African States or Ecowas and in helping to broker a solution to the Liberian conflict through the Abuja Accord.

Dr Mahathir noted that Ghanaian troops had forged excellent cooperation with Malaysian soldiers while on UN peacekeeping operations in Bosnia Herzegovina and Somalia, among others.

"I'm confident that our common concern for the preservation of international peace, stability and the rule of law will see our two countries joining hands in other international peace efforts in the future," he said. -- BERNAMA

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