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Mahathir-Sabotage

PM SAYS ATTEMPTS MADE TO SABOTAGE MALAYSIAN INVESTMENTS ABROAD

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today attempts have been made by various groups in the West, especially among the European media, to frustrate Malaysian investments overseas.

The Prime Minister said they had alleged that one of his sons was involved in the privatisation of the Hwange thermal power plant in Zimbabwe by YTL Corporation as well as the cellular telephone joint-venture project proposed between Celcom and the Zimbabwe Post and Telecommunications Corporation.

"There was also an allegation that Guthrie had obtained a logging concession in Zimbabwe. This is also untrue," he told reporters after receiving a courtesy call by 14 journalists from the Balkan states at his office.

In another case, Dr Mahathir said a bank in Britain recently tried to block the purchase of Britain-based sport car manufacturer Lotus by Proton when the bank initially refused to accept a cashier's cheque from Proton executive chairman Tan Sri Yahya Ahmad as a deposit for the purchase and instead wanted the payment made in cash.

When he visited Zimbabwe recently, he said, Western investors envious of the success of Malaysian entrepreneurs in securing privatisation projects in several countries instigated controversies featuring Malaysian companies abroad.

The Prime Minister said the purchase of 20 per cent equity in a South African oil producing company by Petronas was also questioned although the stake was offered for sale to Petronas.

"Even that they commented as if we are too heavily involved in South Africa," he said.

He said the American-owned Cable News Network (CNN) quoted a member of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) who claimed Malaysia had logged all of its original forests.

"I even heard a woman NGO member saying on CNN that if you visit Malaysia and are taken to see a forest, don't think it is the original forest, as it had been planted to show to visitors. These are the types of allegations being hurled at Malaysia," he said.

He said that when he visited Ghana, a stringer for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) asked questions which appeared to show that Malaysia wished to colonise Ghana after Business Focus Sdn Bhd entered into a joint-venture to revive the Tema Shipyard and Drydock Corporation owned by the Ghanaian government.

"Thus, it looks like there are attempts to cause problems wherever Malaysians venture to invest.

"I have the feeling there is an effort, whether organised or otherwise I do not know, to smear us although our objective in going to developing countries is to cooperate with them in developing their countries," he said.

He said Malaysia would not give up and instead would continue to encourage private companies to expand abroad to help developing countries.

Nevertheless, he said, Malaysian investors should be careful so that those who envied Malaysia would not find reasons to smear the country. --
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