

05 NOV 1996

Mahathir-Conspiracy

PM SAYS THERE IS A CONSPIRACY AGAINST MALAYSIAN BUSINESS ABROAD

By: Kuah Guan Oo

HARARE, Nov 5 (Bernama) -- There is a conspiracy against Malaysian businessmen doing business abroad, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

Referring to foreign press reports that painted a negative picture of Malaysian investments abroad, he said there were some people, especially those from European countries, who were not happy "with our businessmen going to their turf".

He said when Malaysian businessmen went into Papua New Guinea, there was opposition from Australia and, likewise, from France in Cambodia.

Malaysian businesses in Zimbabwe also met with opposition from some local media and Western countries.

"Our offer to them is to get the local 'bumiputras' to participate in the development," he told Malaysian journalists just before the closing of the three-day G-15 summit here.

The Prime Minister said the Malaysian businessmen must expect this kind of opposition. "That's why we always tell them to be good corporate citizens," he added.

He said the foreign press were owned by people who had dominated the local people and now they were talking of democracy.

On Sunday, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe lashed out at the European countries for questioning his government's award to Malaysia's YTL Corp the RM1.5 billion privatisation of the Hwange Thermal Power Station.

Speaking at the state banquet for G-15 leaders, he said there was no going back on the deal between YTL and the owner of the power station, the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority.

Dr Mahathir said he was told by Mugabe that four Zimbabwean ambassadors in Western countries were summoned to explain the deal while the Zimbabwean Minister of Transport and Energy, Simon Moyo, was also asked by diplomats in Harare to explain why and how the partnership was arrived at.

The Prime Minister said the Malaysian government had never summoned the foreign envoys in Kuala Lumpur to explain their countries' decisions and what was clear here was the pressure these Western countries were applying.

He said: "If there is international tender, we go by tender. Sometimes, it is through negotiations...these are state decisions."

Dr Mahathir also said the Malaysian businessmen were going into other developing countries, some of which were still dominated by the European countries.

But he said the Malaysian businesses were only going into areas where they have the expertise and know-how.

Later at a joint press conference after the closing of the summit, Dr Mahathir said in the past trade and investment had usually been from the North to the South.

But what the G-15 countries were doing now was to promote trade and investment among the developing countries themselves.

President Mugabe said they would want to promote not just trade and investment among the South but also between the North and South in a more equitable way. It was through these joint-ventures and projects, in accordance with the objectives of the G-15, that developing countries could interact more effectively. -- BERNAMA

KGO AAM