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Abdullah-PNG

PNG OFFERS FOUR AREAS OF INVESTMENT TO MALAYSIANS

KUALA LUMPUR, April 2 (Bernama) -- Papua New Guinea has identified four areas that Malaysians can invest in to help in the South Pacific nation's development under the South-South Cooperation.

They are the forestry, agriculture, oil and gas, and minerals sectors, which Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan views as having good prospects.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Sir Julius told Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that Papua New Guinea needed Malaysian investment, expertise and training aid for its development.

"The Prime Minister told him that Malaysia wishes to participate in Papua New Guinea's development," Abdullah said when briefing reporters on the meeting between the two prime ministers at the Prime Minister's Department here today.

Sir Julius arrived yesterday for a six-day official visit, accompanied by his wife Lady Stella and a 60-member delegation of government officials and businessmen.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir told Sir Julius that he would ensure that their pledges of mutual help could be realised.

The two countries' commitment to strengthen bilateral relations was evident from the signing of the air services agreement between Transport Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Othman Mohd Rijal and Papua New Guinea High Commissioner Thomas N. Polume, he said.

The agreement provides for Malaysia Airlines and New Guinea Airlines to mount direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Port Moresby.

Dr Mahathir and Sir Julius witnessed the signing after leading their delegations in the talks.

Abdullah said Sir Julius assured Malaysian investors that their investments were safe and any problems they faced would be tackled.

The two leaders also agreed that their senior government officials hold regular consultations to settle any problems which may arise.

Abdullah said the Economic Planning Unit had agreed to offer training to several Papua New Guinea government officials under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme.

Sir Julius was looking forward to getting Kuala Lumpur's help because he regarded Malaysia as a model worth emulating in development, he said.

On international issues, Abdullah said Sir Julius suggested that an Apec Centre for South Pacific be set up to help countries in the region, like Solomon Islands, penetrate the markets of developing and developed countries.

He felt that the South Pacific countries needed help in this respect because most of them (excluding Papua New Guinea) were not members of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec), Abdullah said.

Abdullah said Malaysia would support this proposal if it was brought to the Apec meeting. -- Bernama

ES YBY