

27 SEP 1996

TOP MALAYSIAN ENTREPRENEURS LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES IN ARGENTINA

By: S. Durga Varma

NEW YORK, Sept 27 (Bernama) - Hardly a month after the visit of Argentinian president Carlos Menem to Malaysia, Malaysian entrepreneurs have not wasted any time in making a bee-line to Argentina to seize business opportunities that are currently opening up for them.

The setting up of a fertiliser plant, the privatisation of hydro electric dam, oil and gas projects, a navy vessel refurbishment project and a bridge which would link Argentina and Uruguay are all up for grabs.

Renong Bhd, Mekar Idaman Sdn Bhd (a subsidiary of Acidchem Bhd) and Business Focus Sdn Bhd (which has interests in PSC Industries, Actacorp, Khong Guan, Setron and Perstima) have taken up the challenge in venturing into Argentina.

Led by the Economic Adviser to the Government, Tun Daim Zainuddin, corporate bigwigs Tan Sri Halim Saad, chairman of Renong, Dr Azman Firdaus Shafii, managing director of Mekar Idaman, and Datuk Amin Shah Omar Shah, executive chairman of Business Focus, will leave for Buenos Aires tomorrow at the invitation of President Menem.

The entrepreneurs will study the feasibility, regional approaches, types of project financing and marketing structure of these projects over three days.

Daim told Bernama before his departure for the Argentinian capital that a feasibility study on the fertiliser plant had been completed and he was hopeful that a Memorandum of Understanding for this project could be signed during the visit.

"The Argentinian government thinks that the project is feasible and wants us to get into detailed discussions. If everything goes well, the fertiliser project would be the first major project to be clinched after the visit of President Menem to Malaysia last month," he added.

Production of fertiliser could begin as early as two years from now with an initial capacity of 100,000 tonnes annually.

The project is being proposed on a joint venture basis with Tecnofin Ltd of Argentina.

Daim disclosed that Argentina also wanted to interest the same group of entrepreneurs to participate in the privatisation of the Yacyreta hydro electric dam.

Work on the dam began way back in 1978 but it faced basic financial constraints in the final completion phase.

He said, "It is a government project but since it has been delayed for such a long time, the president wants to privatise the project with foreign participation.

"In fact, this is what we do not want to see happening to the Bakun hydro electric power project.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had reiterated to me that we should not make any mistakes and allow political, labour or financial problems to stall the massive (Bakun) project."

As for the Buenos Aires-Colonia Bridge Project, Daim said Dr Mahathir was keen to see the project go through.

He said the financing, civil and marketing aspects of the bridge project was being undertaken by the Argentinian government.

"Renong has been invited to come on board as a partner to participate on a joint venture basis," he added.

During the forthcoming meeting with President Menem and the State

Energy Commission, the role to be assumed by Renong would be identified, he said. -- BERNAMA
DVS SHY