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A top-level panel for Mahathir Plan to be set up

Fauziah Ismail in Bishkek

BISHKEK, Fri: The Kyrgyz Republic and Malaysia today agreed to set up a high-level intergovernmental commission to oversee the immediate implementation of the Malaysia-Kyrgyz Republic joint economic report, which has been named by Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev as the "Mahathir Plan".

The two governments also agreed to the setting up of a fund to kickstart the mobilisation of resources to implement the Mahathir Plan recommendations.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and President Akayev reached this agreement at a delegations meeting at the Government House here following the handing over of the joint report to the Kyrgyz Government.

Speaking at a joint press conference later, Akayev described the report as "a unique and remarkable report for economies in transition".

He said the report is a "valuable contribution and an investment in the future strengthening of relations between the two countries".

"I have named it the Plan of Dr Mahathir for the reformation of economies in transition... I am sure it will make a most efficient and effective plan for economic reforms."

The joint report, prepared by the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department and the Central Asian republic's Finance Ministry incorporates all aspects of political, economic, administrative and legal structure as well as issues related to the development process.

It provides an analysis of the 11 sectors identified by senior officials of the two governments as needing particular attention.

The study officially began in September last year when an advance team from Malaysia visited the republic to initiate discussions and gather background data.

This was followed by another mission in November for consultative discussions with relevant agencies and to obtain additional data.

A first draft of the report was ready in March this year and handed to the Kyrgyz officials for review.

Dr Mahathir thanked Akayev for naming the report after him. "I do not think I deserve it... it places a high responsibility on me to try and make the plan work.

"Since my last visit and Akayev's visit to Malaysia, we have developed a close friendship. I would like to think Akayev as a personal friend and the Kyrgyz Republic as a special country close to Malaysia."

He said Malaysia wants to help "this beautiful and great country" fully realise its potential.

"We have some experience which may be useful to the Kyrgyz Government.

"We (Malaysia) are ready to examine and modify the approaches we have adopted for our own development to fit the needs of the republic," he said.

Malaysia will continuously be involved with the implementation of the recommendations in the report, he added.

"Some of the recommendations may lend themselves to early implementation while others may take some time. We have to be patient and persist in our efforts," he said.

Earlier in his speech when presenting the report to Akayev, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia does not claim to have all the answers to Kyrgyz queries and

questions. What it does have is a wealth of development experience.

The study, he added, is as comprehensive as it can be but to fully realise its potential, there is a need for a change in mindset and attitudes towards the challenges.

"A sense of urgency has to be inculcated. There has to be an openness of mind to new and better ways of doing things. There must be courage in trying out new ideas.

"There will be failures, of course, but I hope we do not allow those mistakes to discourage us from learning and trying again.

"I am confident that the adoption of such a positive and outward-looking attitude will, in the long run, ensure the successful development of the Kyrgyz Republic," he said.

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