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Rice

BERNAS TO VENTURE INTO WORLD'S RICE MARKET

By: Mohamed Nasir Yusoff

CONAKRY, Nov 10 (Bernama) -- Padiberas Nasional Berhad (Bernas) which is successful in the joint-venture padi planting project in the Republic of Guinea now plans to move into the international market.

Its managing director, Mohamed Ibrahim Nor, said Bernas had signed an agreement with the Cuban government for the import of 300,000 tonnes into that country while the rice trade accord with Thailand had been finalised.

"We hope to sign a deal next week to build a godown in Pakistan to stock rice and another agreement with a private Vietnamese firm end of this year," he told reporters after the opening of Bernas' poultry farm in Dubreka, 50km from Guinea's capital, by Malaysian Agriculture Minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud recently.

He said Bernas' attention includes the markets of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

Bernas, through its subsidiary, Sobergui, invested US\$10 million for the integrated project of padi planting and milling as well as planting of tropical fruit trees in Monchon, 200km from here.

The joint venture is held within the South-South Cooperation framework after the visit by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Guinea last November and on the request by Guinea President Lansana Conte that Malaysia help the country to improve its rice planting sector.

Dr Sulaiman and his entourage were here from Nov 4 until yesterday to witness the first harvesting of padi at the 800-ha estate.

Mohamed Ibrahim said Bernas, which signed a joint-venture agreement with local company Safricom for rice distribution in the local market and nearby countries was now negotiating with the Guinea government to build a rice-storage warehouse in Conakry.

"We are trying to get the Guinea government's approval to import rice into this country," he said adding Guinea imports more than 250,000 tonnes of rice a year. -- BERNAMA

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