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Dr M, Muluzi hold talks on economic matters

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad held bilateral talks with Malawi president Dr Bakili Muluzi yesterday, touching mainly on enhancing bilateral trade and investment opportunities.

The one-hour talks, which was also attended by Energy, Telecommunications and Post Minister Datuk Leo Moggie, was held at the Sanjika Palace, the official residence of Muluzi.

After the talks, Dr Mahathir and Muluzi went to the proposed site of the Blantyre City Centre Hotel, a turnkey project carried out by G-Two Holdings Bhd.

Dr Mahathir was given the honour of unveiling the foundation stone of the project.

"This is a beautiful country with ideal surroundings," the Prime Minister said just prior to the unveiling ceremony. "There is a slight difference with Kuala Lumpur though ... clear blue skies and clean, fresh air... you should be happy with your country."

Dr Mahathir said soon Malawi would see development but he hoped that there would be no environmental damage.

He advised G-Two Holdings not to think of immediate returns but to go for long-term commitment to develop the Malawi tourism industry.

"The hotel is just the means to promote tourism, not the end," he said.

"If you charge too much, tourism will not grow and the tourists will stay away."

Also present were G-Two Holdings executive chairman Datuk Lim Huah Leong and Malawi Tourism Minister Patrick Mbewe.

Later, in the township of Ndirande, Dr Mahathir performed the symbolic handover of 100 low-cost houses to Muluzi, marking the launch of a 20-year housing project, also developed by G-Two Holdings.

At least 10,000 low-cost units costing RM3.5 billion will be built in the 800ha township. G-Two Holdings has secured a 99-year lease to carry out the project.

In return, G-Two Holdings will donate 100 units of the two-room house to the Malawi Government for distribution to the poor.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Muluzi, then performed Friday prayers at the Blantyre Mosque.

Dr Mahathir addressed the Malawi-Malaysia Business Meeting at Mount Soche Hotel and fielded questions from Malawi businessmen before touring the project headquarters of Telekom Malaysia Bhd's joint venture with Malawi Telecom to set up a GSM cellular telecommunications business.

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