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Mahathir-Kuwait

MAHATHIR'S VISIT TO GULF STATES NOT MERELY A GOODWILL GESTURE

By: Abdul Rahman Ahmad

KUWAIT CITY, April 4 (Bernama)-- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to Kuwait and Bahrain is not simply a goodwill gesture but a substantiate one to the Gulf states, particularly Kuwait which is keen to develop a stronger link-up that will bind businessmen from the two countries in future dealings.

A Malaysian foreign ministry official today said Kuwait was looking forward to the visit which had been described as a moral booster to the Kuwait-Malaysia relation.

He said the Prime Minister, who arrives here tomorrow to begin the three-day visit, has been assured of a grand welcome befitting a great Islamic leader that he is.

"The visit can also be seen as an indication that the Gulf nation is trying to depart from its dependence on Western countries to East Asia which could provide a better market," he said.

He said the Gulf States now see Malaysia as a strong nation in East Asia and they feel this is a good opportunity for Kuwaiti businessmen to form closer cooperation with their Malaysia counterparts so that they could participate in any dealings through joint venture.

"They want this kind of connection. Now they recognise our businessmen and they feel it is time they go with their Malaysian counterpart in any big deal in any part of the world," the official said.

He advised Malaysian businessmen to take this opportunity and invest in Kuwait, which is still undergoing re-development after the Gulf War in 1990.

The official also said that the Gulf states wanted to learn from Dr Mahathir who has done well economically and politically in Malaysia, whereas at one time the Arab nations saw Malaysia as a country that was only looking for financial assistance from them.

"Now the people in the Gulf states have high regards for the Prime Minister, and their leaders feel that it will do them good if they are seen associating with him (Dr Mahathir)," he said.

He added that the Gulf States were also interested to learn more on the success of Dr Mahathir's privatisation policies particularly those related to utilities like electricity and telecommunications.

Dr Mahathir's visit includes bilateral meetings with Kuwaiti leaders, attendy a reception with Kuwaiti and Malaysian businessmen and witnessing the signing of a double taxation agreement.

He will also visit the Kuwait Liberation Tower, the fourth tallest telecommunications tower in the world. -- BERNAMA

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