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Make sure project does not fail, PM tells MTD

Kamarul Yunus in Santiago

SANTIAGO, Wed: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, while praising MTD Capital Bhd for launching its joint-venture project in Chile, wants the company to make sure its real estate development project does not fail.

"I am reminding the Malaysian partner not to dream too much but get down to work and realise the project as fast as possible," he said when officiating at the inauguration of the US\$1 billion (US\$1 = RM3.24) El Principal property development joint-venture project in Pirque, about 45km from here today.

Located on a 600ha farm land, the El Principal is a joint-venture between MTD Capital and a Chilean entrepreneur, Jorge Fontaine Aldunate. Through the Malaysian-Chile collaboration, a joint-venture company called El Principal S.A was set up to plan, manage and implement the project in Chile.

"I give MTD Capital three years and when the time is up, I will come to see whether anything has been done to the project," he said, adding that the Malaysian partner can expect stern punishment if it fails to deliver during the given time-frame.

Describing the area surrounding the project site as "beautiful with mountain and river", Dr Mahathir hopes the physical construction of the joint venture project would take off and he expressed his confidence that MTD Capital and its Chilean counterpart are capable of developing the area.

"When I visited Chile five years ago, I felt that the distance across the Pacific was quite long. I did not even dream that I will be officiating at the inauguration of the project of this scale involving a Malaysian company in Chile," Dr Mahathir added.

Earlier, MTD Capital executive chairman Datuk Dr Nik Hussein Abdul Rahman said the project was mooted in November last year, although he was first introduced to Chile when he participated in an exhibition in 1993.

He said during that period, he failed to identify such an opportunity to participate in a joint-venture project in Chile.

It was three years later that his luck seems to change when Malaysian Ambassador to Chile Lily Zachariah introduced him to Fontaine, who happened to be seeking a Malaysian partner to develop his family's land. A year later, MTD Capital sent its team of officers to Chile and submitted its proposal to Fontaine.

Nik Hussein said the company's presence in Chile was the result of the endless effort and encouragement given by the Prime Minister in promoting bilateral ties under the South-South cooperation.

He said the MTD Capital, through its joint-venture company, El Principal S.A., plans to develop its project under the theme, "Intelligent township within a resort-cum-country settings."

"The project theme suggests that the proposed development is a self-contained township that offers resort attractions set amid country environment and complemented with the best technological systems.

"It is a township that integrates all the needs and wants through proper planning and positioning of technology, resort and country element," he said, adding that development of the project will span over a period between 10 and 15 years.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here last Sunday, was on a four-day official

visit to Chile, after making a four-day official visit to Cuba beginning September 25. It is part of the 11-day visit to the four nations in the Caribbean and Latin American region. Dr Mahathir will leave for Montevideo tomorrow for a two-day official visit to Uruguay.

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