

04 MAY 1997

Malaysia-Botswana

MALAYSIA, BOTSWANA IDENTIFY NEW AREAS OF COOPERATION

By: E.Sivabalan

Gaborone (Botswana), May 4 (Bernama) -- Botswana, a southern African nation, that is emerging as a potential market for investors is keen to form joint ventures with Malaysian companies in the construction industry, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said the construction industry had been identified by the Botswana Government as one of the important sectors in the economic development of the country.

Speaking to Malaysian journalists here last night, Dr Mahathir who is on an official visit to Botswana, said the Botswana Government had set aside funds to build houses for the local people.

"They think that if foreign construction companies can work with the local partners here, then they would welcome that," he said after talks Botswana President Sir Ketumile Masire.

The Prime Minister who had earlier visited Malawi said Botswana had also identified new areas of cooperation such as providing infrastructure and facilities in the tourism industry.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysian companies could also venture into the construction of roads since Botswanians had the expertise and experience in that field.

"There may be scope for other labour intensive industries because they have very high unemployment rate and they would like to have investment which will enable their people to be employed," he said.

He also said Malaysia Airline and AirAsia, Malaysia's two national carriers, could consider expanding their services to Botswana and Malawi when Malaysian investments had started to come in.

The Prime Minister said since Malaysia Airlines was fully extended at the moment, AirAsia could undertake a study on operating services to these places.

Dr Mahathir noted that British Airways operates big aircraft into these destinations because of Britain's commercial interest in these countries.

-- BERNAMA

ES AAM