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Mahathir-Training

MALAYSIA OFFERS TRAINING TO HELP THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

By: Zulkefli Salleh

BISHKEK (Kyrgyzstan), Sept 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today offered to provide Malaysia's expertise in six key areas to the Kyrgyz people to assist in the development of the Central Asian country.

Dr Mahathir also handed over Malaysia's report on a comprehensive joint study on the Kyrgyz Republic's economy to President Askar Akayev to complement the republic's development programme and to assist in its transition to become a market economy.

The offer for training was made at a meeting of the two delegations and the presentation of the report in conjunction with the Prime Minister's three-day working visit here.

The specific areas training would be offered are in the banking, financial sector and the fiscal system; legal and constitutional affairs; trade and industry; energy sector; agriculture sector and transportation sector, Dr Mahathir said at the delegation meeting.

He said that as a fellow developing country, Malaysia's resources were limited and as such Malaysia felt that the most effective manner to contribute would be in the form of providing training and to share its experiences including hands-on training.

He said there was great potential for cooperation between both countries' private sector where their chambers of commerce could start by building strategic alliances and explore potential areas of business.

He was told, he said, that some of these cooperative efforts had already started.

Dr Mahathir said the offer for training in banking and financial sector was made because they are critical sectors, as a sound financial sector would go a long way towards building investors' confidence.

This would cover the training and upgrading of Kyrgyz senior bank officials at Bank Negara Malaysia to include monetary fiscal policies, commercial bank operations, risk assessment and management, and promotion of investments, he said.

The Inland Revenue Board and the Royal Customs and Excise Department would provide training on the tax and fiscal system, he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia could help assist Kyrgyz in the setting up of a Mida-type organisation and the setting up of an agency to oversee the management of free trade zones. Mida is the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority.

He said that Kyrgyz officials could also be attached to Mida to learn about the formulation of industrial policies and promotion and management of investment.

In the energy sector, he said that Malaysia could provide exposure to Kyrgyz on its experience on privatisation in the energy sector while in the agricultural sector, Malaysia could share her experience in the monitoring and evaluation system for agriculture projects.

On the joint economic report, Dr Mahathir said it took about a year to complete. "It does not have the answers to all your queries and questions but what it does have is the wealth of our own development experiences," he said

Dr Mahathir said the intention of the study was to provide senior officials of Kyrgyz with an economic road map, as well as to identify potential areas for foreign investment.

The joint economic study which began in September last year was carried out by Malaysia's Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in the Prime Minister's Department and the Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic. It provides an analysis of the 11 sectors identified by Malaysia's senior officials as needing particular attention.

Dr Mahathir said the approach of the study was one of maximising the use of limited resources by ensuring that the development of one sector would in turn support the development of another.

"The study should serve as a complement and supplement to the numerous studies already carried out by various aid agencies and international organisations for the Kyrgyz Republic," he said.

However, President Akayev, at a joint press conference later, described the report a unique one ever prepared for Kyrgyz and said he regarded it as a special gift from a special friend. He named the report as the "Mahathir Plan".

The Kyrgyz government had proposed a high-level joint committee between Kyrgyz and Malaysian officials to oversee the implementation of the report and a special fund would be set up to implement immediately some of the proposals, he said.

On Malaysia's offer for training in the various fields, Akayev said he considered them as a valuable contribution to the development of Kyrgyz which he said would go a long way towards strengthening bilateral relationship.

Dr Mahathir, in turn, said since his first visit to Kyrgyz last year and Akayev's the year before, both countries had developed a close relationship and he regarded the Kyrgyz president as a personal friend.

For that reason, Malaysia would like to work closely with the people of Kyrgyz in their quest to realise their full potential, he said to a question by a local reporter as to why Malaysia has chosen Kyrgyz to make the economic report.

Dr Mahathir also said that as Kyrgyz is a relatively small country it was not difficult for Malaysia to assist in their development.

In conjunction with the presentation of the report, Malaysia's EPU and the Ministry of Finance of Kyrgyz signed a Complementary Agreement on Economic Cooperation. The EPU was represented by its director-general, Tan Sri Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman, while Kyrgyz Minister of Finance Toalaybek Koychumanov signed on behalf of his government. -- BERNAMA

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