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M'SIAN-S AFRICAN FIRMS IN PROJECTS WORTH RM2.63 BLN

KUALA LUMPUR, March 8 (Bernama) -- Three Malaysian companies today signed separate agreements with their counterparts from South Africa, two of which involved a combined investment of RM2.63 billion.

The signing of the agreements here was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and South African President Nelson Mandela.

The agreements were between Jaringan Infrastruktur Sdn Bhd and Plessey of South Africa, Trakprops 31 Pty Ltd and ABI Construction Sdn Bhd and MK Malefane Entertainment (PTY) Ltd and Diversified Systems Sdn Bhd.

It would involve various projects such as mixed property development in Cape Town (South Africa), a ducting system for telecommunications in Selangor and the inauguration of a joint venture bank in South Africa, Southern Bank of Africa.

The managing director of property-based ABI Construction, Mohd Zahari Abdul Rahman, said the group had identified a site known as Mitchel Plain in Cape Town for several mixed property and industrial development projects costing US\$1.0 billion (RM2.48 billion).

Speaking to reporters after the signing ceremony, Mohd Zahari said the size targetted was about six to eight hectares and the project was very important as Mitchel Plain was also the main development thrust in Cape Town.

Mohd Zahari said the project, the group's second overseas venture after Madagascar (involving an investment of RM500 million for a roadworks project), would be managed by its 51-49 joint-venture company known as Trackprops.

"The projects in Capetown will start soon and are to be completed in five years time," he said.

Apart from Cape Town, the joint-venture company would also seek opportunities elsewhere in South Africa and in the Southern African Development Community later on, he added.

"A number of exciting projects have already been identified and a serious evaluation of the profitability and socio-economic benefits will begin as soon as offices are opened in Capetown, within the next few weeks," he said.

On the local front, Mohd Zahari said the group was currently handling various commercial property projects worth RM600 million, mostly in Terengganu.

Meanwhile, Plessey Pty Ltd (an international telecommunication company) has been appointed by Jaringan Infrastruktur Sdn Bhd for the development of a common ducting system for use by a telecommunications operator in Selangor.

Jaringan Infrastruktur is a consortium formed to implement Project Jaringan Selangor and its consists of four members, namely Permodalan YBK Sdn Bhd (30 percent), SAP Holdings Bhd (30 percent), Ingres Software Sdn Bhd and Inai Kristal Sdn Bhd (20 percent each).

Its executive Chairman, Kamarudin Ahmad, said Plessey would be the turnkey contractor where there would be a transfer technology by Plessey to Jaringan Infrastruktur, mainly in the field of telecommunication engineering and information technology.

The underground tunnel, which involved an investment of RM150 million for 56 km in length, would be undertaken in three phases and was expected to be completed in five years, said Kamarudin.

"We have already sent our proposals to the Selangor authorities and if everything goes well, we will be starting with the first phase by July this year," he said.

Meanwhile, Killingham (Malaysia) Bhd's joint venture bank in South Africa, Southern Bank of Africa, was inaugurated today and will start operations next month. Its first branch will be in Johannesburg.

The bank is licensed to operate a universal bank in South Africa with an initial capital of Rand 100 million (RM60 million) held in equal proportion by Killingham and national Empowerment Trust Investment Fund Pty Ltd (NETIF). -- BERNAMA

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