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MIDDLE EASTERN'S INVESTORS' FAITH IN M'SIAN ECONOMY NOT SHAKEN

By: Muammar Kamaruddin

MANAMA, (BAHRAIN), Oct 14 (Bernama) -- Dallah Albaraka Holding Group, which signed a joint-venture agreement with Johor Corporation here today to manage various Islamic funds, said it has full confidence in the Malaysian economy.

Sheikh Mahmood Jameel Hassoubah, Dallah Albaraka's first deputy chairman said: "We have full confidence in Malaysia's investment policy. That is why we encourage the regional (Middle East) investors to invest in Malaysia."

The recent downtrend of the ringgit against the US dollar and the fall in the stock market was just "a storm in a tea cup" and Malaysia would successfully overcome these very soon, he told reporters after the signing today.

"This is our believe as foreign investors in Malaysia...we will not be affected by this storm, it did not shake our believe in Malaysia's strong economic management under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and deputy prime minister and finance minister, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim."

He said Albaraka has already invested more than RM350 million in banking, palm oil and health care sectors in Malaysia and "has not sold a single share in the stock market and any of our investments in Malaysia since the currency and stock markets turmoils."

Johor Capital Holdings Sdn Bhd, the investment arm of Johor Corp signed the joint-venture agreement with Albaraka Islamic Investment Bank of Bahrain, a member company of Dallah Albaraka to set up a a 50:50 joint venture company, Albaraka-PJB Pacific Investment Company, to manage the various Islamic funds.

The joint venture company would initially manage a US\$20 million (about RM60 million) open-ended fund called the Asian Islamic Equity Fund which is expected to be launched by next month.

Datuk Muhammad Ali Hashim, chief executive of Johor Corp, said Albaraka's statement would improve foreign investors confidence in the Malaysian economy which recently faced a downtrend, partly as a result of the regional currency crisis.

"It now appears that the worst may be over and both the ringgit and share prices are rebounding, albeit cautiously, but firmly reflecting the true strength and resilience of the Malaysian economy, especially for the long term."

Today's ceremony is obviously a testimony to a strong vote of confidence by Dallah Albaraka towards Malaysia's and the Asean economic fundamentals.

Dallah Albaraka group is a Jeddah-based conglomerate in the Middle East with operations like banking, manufacturing, real property and healthcare.

The group has its investments spread out in more than 40 countries, especially in North Africa and the Middle East.

It has invested in Malaysia for the last 10 years through its investment vehicle, Dallah Albaraka. -- BERNAMA

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