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PM: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BAKUN & ABB CAN BE RESOLVED

PETALING JAYA, July 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today gave his assurance that there was no dispute over the RM15.5 billion Bakun hydroelectric dam project, saying that it would proceed as planned.

He said that the differences between the developer, Ekran Bhd, and the contractor, Asea Brown Boveri, over the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract could be resolved.

"There is no dispute on Bakun...the project will go on," he told a press conference upon his arrival after a two-month-long "working holiday" abroad at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang this evening.

Dr. Mahathir was commenting on remarks made his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, last Tuesday that there was disagreement between the parties over the EPC which could delay the project.

As a result, Anwar had directed the Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie to help the parties to resolve the matter. The parties are expected to meet tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir said that "some people may not be happy...(they may) have personal feelings about certain things, but we will overcome this."

He said Bakun was a national project and that the government would not allow "personal feelings or unhappiness to come in the way of a project that was essential to the country.

"All contracts can give rise to a dispute...it can be resolved. We have resolved thousands of problems," the Prime Minister said.

There was speculation that Ekran wants the Bakun construction contracts to go to companies linked to it or recommended by it while ABB, the Swiss-Swedish engineering group, has insisted on open tenders. -- BERNAMA

JR MR SHY