

16 MAY 1998  
Mahathir-MoU  
BE SERIOUS WITH MoUs, SAYS PM

By: Azman Ujang

KHARTOUM, May 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysian businessmen who signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with foreign parties but were not serious in implementing them have come under fire from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Mahathir said the situation regarding businessmen not taking seriously the MoUs they signed while accompanying him on his overseas visits had gone "too much to my liking".

Many of the MoUs signed by businessmen who followed him on his visits to China, South America and Central Asia had not been implemented at all, he said at a meeting with Malaysian businessmen who accompanied him on his three-day visit to Sudan which ended Friday.

Dr Mahathir also told the story of a businessman who, after getting a huge contract for a hydro-electrical dam, not only did not carry out the project but tried to peddle the contract to a third party.

"After obtaining this contract worth RM7 billion, he tried to peddle the contract all over the country," said the prime minister.

He said while the government was encouraging Malaysian businessmen to invest overseas, they had to be always mindful of their responsibility to uphold the country's good name.

"You must always remember that when investing overseas, you are like ambassadors of the country.

"You have to be good corporate citizens. Of course you have to make money but at the same time you must ensure that the good name of Malaysia is upheld," Dr Mahathir said.

He also gave some tips to Malaysian businessmen on areas to venture into in Sudan, the largest country in Africa.

In his view, Sudan stood out as a country with vast potentials for investment in agriculture whose products especially cattle and fruits could easily find markets in Malaysia.

"Sudan has 120 million head of cattle and the quality of the beef here is very good. It would pay for Malaysian businessmen to look into sourcing beef as well as fruits from Sudan," he said.

As for shipping, the Prime Minister said by increasing trade between Malaysia and Sudan, more ships from Malaysia could call at Port Sudan and bring goods from Sudan not only to Malaysia but also other ports.

Dr Mahathir also promised to talk to Tan Sri Hassan Marican, the president and chief executive of Petronas which now owns the Malaysian International Shipping Corporation (MISC), to look into the possibility of using river transportation to move goods within Sudan by using special boats, in place of road transportation.

Petronas, the national oil company, is also involved in a US\$3 billion joint venture with three other companies for the development of Sudan's oil industry, including a 1,500-km pipeline now being laid to enable the country to export oil from June next year.

He also spoke of the potentials of the Nile, the world's longest river, as a viable river transportation to enhance trade.

The 6,632-km long river runs into Sudan and several other central African countries and ends up in the Mediterranean.

The Prime Minister also would like Malaysian companies to do to Sudan what Japanese companies did to Malaysia.

He said Japanese companies created a lot of wealth in Malaysia by

setting up factories which in the process greatly boosted the country's economic development.

"This has also made Malaysia one of the biggest markets for Japanese goods. You can help Sudan to grow and Sudan will be a good market for Malaysia.

"If you participate in Sudan's development and it becomes richer, Malaysia can sell a lot of things to Sudan," said Dr Mahathir, who is often dubbed as Malaysia's Number One Salesman.

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