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Mahathir - Smart

KEEP UP THE IMAGE, MAHATHIR TELLS BUSINESSMAN

By: Zulkefli Salleh

JOHANNESBURG, July 25 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has asked Malaysian companies and investors in South Africa and elsewhere to keep up the good image they earned through the concept of smart partnership and "prosper your neighbour" policy.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a two-day visit here, also reminded them of the importance of fulfilling their social responsibility and not just think of making profit from their ventures.

"Malaysia's philosophy is to help our neighbours prosper, albeit, in a limited way because we ourselves are not very prosperous," he said.

The prime minister was speaking during a visit Friday to the Pecanwood estate country living resort being developed by Malaysia's Country Heights Holdings and a local developer Maccon, about 60 kilometres from here.

Dr Mahathir, a staunch advocator of the "prosper your neighbour" policy, said experience had shown that impoverished neighbours would only bring problems such as illegal immigrants, which South Africa was familiar with.

The Pecanwood project, initiated in 1996, covers 237 hectares of former tomato farmland overlooking a big natural lake and mountains.

Besides a 18-hole Jack Nicklaus-quality golf course, it also has a marina and provides for 900 bungalow lots priced at between RM100,000 and RM800,000, about half of which have been sold.

Dr Mahathir praised the Pecanwood project which he said was a good example of smart partnership and "prosper your neighbour" policy because it would contribute towards the development of South Africa's tourism industry.

He said he was glad the RM120-million project had created job opportunities to the local people not only in the construction industry but in the hospitality industry as well.

Dr Mahathir commended the joint venture for including a student exchange programme which allows for 30 students a year to go for training in the hotel and tourism industry in Malaysia.

Simon Molefe, Premier of North West Executive Popo, in his speech said he was glad that the project has provided 1,500 jobs for construction workers and 350 other ancillary jobs.

"The project will in itself also have an accelerator effect on the local, the provincial and indeed the national economy as this estate will rely in the surrounding economy for continuous supplies and service," he said.

Chief executive of Country Heights Tan Sri Lee Kim Yew told reporters that the exchange programme under which 30 local students would stay in Malaysia for nine months was inspired by Dr Mahathir's smart partnership and "prosper your neighbour" policy.

Also present was Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie was also present.

-- BERNAMA

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