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Mahathir-Conte

M'SIA MAY SET UP OIL PALM AND RUBBER ESTATES IN GUINEA

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia is keen to explore the possibility of setting up oil palm and rubber estates in Guinea.

He said there was great potential in the agricultural sector in the West African nation, which is rich in fertile land ideal for rice, sugar cane and tropical fruits.

Speaking at a joint news conference with visiting President Lansana Conte of Guinea at the Prime Minister's Department here, Dr Mahathir said there was scope for palm oil, rubber and other agricultural products in Guinea.

Dr Mahathir said Bernas Bhd was already in Guinea and had started rice farming as well as breeding chicken for eggs and broiler chicken.

"But we think there are other areas where we can cooperate," he said.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir and Conte witnessed the signing of four agreements and memoranda of understanding.

The agreement on trade was signed by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar on behalf of Malaysia while Guinea was represented by its Minister of Trade and Industry Madikaba Camara.

The other agreement was on information cooperation. Malaysia was represented by Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Guinea by its Communication Minister Alpha Ibrahima Mongo Diallo.

The memorandum of understanding on education cooperation was signed by Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak on behalf of Malaysia while Guinea was represented by its Communication Minister Alpha Ibrahima Mongo Diallo.

Malaysia and Guinea also signed MoUs for the establishment of a sister-port relationship between the Port Klang Authority and Autonome De Conakry. It was signed by the general manager of Port Klang Authority, Datin O.C. Phang, and Autonome De Conakry's general manager Aliou Diallo.

President Conte arrived here yesterday leading a 33-member delegation. The visit is at the invitation of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah.

Guinea, a French-speaking West African nation of more than seven million people, has commercial deposits of bauxite, iron ore and diamonds besides fertile land ideal for rice, sugar cane and tropical fruits.

Asked if Guinea could expect an increase in Malaysian assistance in other fields apart from investment in the agricultural sector, Dr Mahathir said: "We would like to increase but we are constrained by the fact that our economy has not fully recovered".

"But to the extent that we can, we would like to take our participation in the economic development of Guinea," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would like to learn Guinea's experience through the exchange of officers.

This, he said, would allow both countries to learn how development projects were being carried out in each country.

Conte, on his part, said the agreements and MoUs signed today between Malaysia and Guinea would strengthen bilateral cooperation.

"We want to see that our cooperation (with Malaysia) is beneficial to the people of the two countries," he said.

"If we think that our cooperation is not beneficial to our people, then we abandon it.

"But, we will do everything possible so that our cooperation is beneficial to the people of Malaysia and the people of Guinea," Conte said.

Prior to the signing ceremony, Dr Mahathir and Conte held bilateral talks after which the two leaders attended a delegation meeting of both sides.

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