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SAID-Omar

M'SIA TO SHARE EXPERIENCE IN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AT SAID 99

By: Muin Abdul Majid

VICTORIA FALLS (Zimbabwe), Oct 1 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will share its experience in economic empowerment with African countries at the Third Southern Africa International Dialogue 1999 (SAID 99) beginning here on Sunday.

SAID 99 Joint Executive Group chairman Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman said today that this was in line with the theme of this year's dialogue, "Economic Empowerment Through Smart Partnership".

"This is very important for the participating countries as they will be able to exchange ideas on how to provide more opportunities for their people in order to be better off economically so as to fulfill their independence," he told Malaysian journalists here.

Dr Omar, who is Science Advisor to the Prime Minister, said three sessions would be devoted to issues related to economic empowerment where Malaysia would be able to relate its efforts in empowering its people, especially the Bumiputeras.

These will include the New Economic Policy and the various programmes undertaken by MARA.

He said the Malaysian delegation to be led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, would be sending a so-called "economic empowerment team" comprising senior officials of Mara and the Implementation Coordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to arrive here tomorrow.

"The team will inform the participants how Malaysia's economic empowerment is carried out by way of well-planned programmes and policies through the smart partnership concept between the government, the private sector and other related bodies.

"The objective is to enable Malaysia to become a model for them, one which they can adjust to suit each individual country," he said.

He said the team would relate how economic empowerment was done in Malaysia including enhancing skills, providing business opportunities, extending financial assistance and finding the markets for products.

SAID 99 will be officially opened by Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe on Sunday night at the Elephant Hills Intercontinental Hotel in this resort teeming with tourists attracted by the magnificent 1.7km wide Victoria Falls.

At Victoria Falls, the Zambezi River plunges 100 metres into the Zambezi gorge and up to five million cubic metres of water falls every minute. Explorer David Livingstone gave the falls its present name in 1855.

The falls is also known as "Mosi oa Tunya" - or The Smoke that Thunders.

Dr Omar Said said Malaysia would also be sending a three-member "economic recovery team" made up of Bank Negara deputy governor Datuk Zeti Akhtar Aziz, Securities Commission chairman Ali Kadir and Danaharta chief Azman Yahya.

He said they would brief delegates about measures taken by Malaysia to turn around its economy battered by the Asian financial and economic crisis which started in 1997.

The three-day dialogue will be attended by the heads of state and government of members of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Ghana, Uganda, Kenya and Malaysia, Angola, Botswana, Congo, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Dr Omar said one of the most tangible benefits of SAID so far was that the heads of government concerned had developed closer rapport with each other and could sit down and discuss matters in a frank manner.

"If this can be followed up by more economic activities, the dialogue would bring real benefits to this region," he added.

The first SAID was held in Kasane, Botswana in 1997 followed by the second edition in Swakopmund, Namibia last year. It is modelled after the Langkawi International Dialogue (LID).

SAID 99 is co-organized by the governments, business and labour leaders of SADC with the assistance of the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management, of which Dr Omar is the chairman.

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