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Ghana-Mahathir

GHANAIAN LEADER PAYS TRIBUTE TO MAHATHIR

By: Muin Abdul Majid

VICTORIA FALLS, (Zimbabwe), Oct 6 (Bernama) -- President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana paid tribute Tuesday to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his vision and unrelenting struggle to evolve an economic paradigm that responds to the development aspirations of all.

"Let me take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the initiator of this very rewarding, innovative and equity-based philosophy of smart partnership, Dr Mahathir," he said.

Addressing a session of the 3rd Southern Africa International Dialogue (SAID 99) which ended here Tuesday after three days of discussions, Rawlings said that extraordinary marshalling of national resolve and commitment by Malaysia to overcome formidable odds should be instructive for African countries as they grappled to survive the commodity price slump.

Dr Mahathir was the only non-African leader to address the dialogue which is modelled after the Malaysia-initiated series of Langkawi International Dialogue (LID).

In resuscitating Malaysia's economy after the debilitating East Asian financial crisis, Dr Mahathir had challenged the economic recovery recipe prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by taking opposite measures, criticised by many, that turned out to be far more effective, he said.

Rawlings lauded Malaysian companies, which in pursuit of smart partnership, were "blazing new trails" by participating in highly rewarding investment relations in Sub-Sahara Africa.

Rawlings said not only were they helping to bring new insights into Ghana's production relations and management practices, but were also introducing technological advancements that would have taken African countries scores of years to master.

Citing an example, Rawlings said the equity participation in Ghana Telcom by Telekom Malaysia was rapidly propelling Ghana into the threshold of information technology explosion never before anticipated by his country.

"It is only by forging smart partnership built on equity and a prosper-thy-neighbour philosophy among those of us in the South that we will be able to integrate collectively into the global economy," Rawlings said.

Elaborating on the commodity price slump, he said it was wrecking the already impoverished economies of the primary commodity exporting countries of the South, already overburdened with debt.

"This cannot be coincidence. It can only be the work of manipulators.

"We need to break the cycle in which, for every step of advancement we make to empower our people to improve the quality of life, we are brought back several steps," he said.

The Ghanaian president said being the single largest source of primary commodities such as cocoa, gold, copper, diamond and others, Africa must be able to establish its own commodity markets.

"There should be no reason why the Gold Exchange or the Cocoa Market should not be located in, say South Africa for gold and Cote D'Ivoire for cocoa, so that we can collectively begin to assert our combined influence on global development," he said.

Rawlings said efforts should also be made to make each regional

grouping inclusive to all other sub-regional groupings to advance the objectives of the African Economic Community.

"This, in my view, would hasten the process of economic integration and result in the accelerated industrial and technical advancement of the continent through networking and guaranteeing and expanded market size for our entrepreneurs," he added.

-- BERNAMA

MAM RYN