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LID-GHANA

GHANA LEARNS FROM MALAYSIA THROUGH LID

By: Arul Rajoo

LANGKAWI, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- Ghana gained independence five months ahead of Malaysia but yet the Western African country is wondering why it is still lagging far behind its Asian counterpart.

"We want to know why? We want to learn things, a couple of things that Malaysia wants to teach us," said Ghana's Dr M.N.B. Ayiku, a director of the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management Ltd (CPTM).

This was why Ghana looked forward to joining the Langkawi International Dialogue (LID), he said, in dismissing claims that Malaysia was patronising African countries participating in the LID which began in 1995.

"We want to learn but advanced countries won't teach us although we have been with them for a long time. Malaysia has moved and we are not. We want to know why," he said on the sidelines of the LID 2000 here today.

Ayiku, who has attended the LID since it started, said African countries were grateful to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for taking the trouble to show by example how "we (Africans) should lead our country."

Two days ago, Dr Ruth Labedo, a member of Zimbabwe's National Consultative Economic Forum, said some European countries felt threatened by the possible impact resulting from LID and are accusing Malaysia of being like a "godfather" to African countries.

"Dr Mahathir is a leader with innovation and vision. The LID has opened our eyes to many things, we can't believe that Malaysia got its independence the same year as us. How do you do it?"

Furthermore, African countries were amazed with the way Malaysia handled the recent economic crisis without the intervention of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

Ayiku said that the African countries were subjected to various conditions imposed by the IMF and World Bank.

He said that the African countries were impressed with Malaysia's ability to overcome the financial crisis speedily and felt that the selective capital control measures had done the country good.

"We would have taken 10 years. Your Finance Minister (Tun Daim Zainuddin) said here last year that IMF should "leave us alone"...but we can't say that, why?" he added.

"That is why we would rather steal the idea from you (Malaysia)," he said.

Ayiku said five years ago, African countries participating in the dialogue were ignorant of the Smart Partnership concept and some even thought it was a way of patronising them.

However, the progress made since then has shown that the Smart Partnership concept has indeed turned out to be a "win-win situation" for all its members.

Ayiku said African countries accepted the setting up of Malaysian businesses there as both countries gained from it, for example Telekom Malaysia and the Berjaya Group have ventured to Ghana in telecommunications and resorts.

The LID has brought African countries together, compared with several regional fora there, Ayiku said.

"We have problems, for example our neighbour Togo is a French speaking nation. Now, we are setting up our own hubs, grouping private and public sector people together and we learned this from the LID," he added. --

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