

20/11/2000

Sudan seeks help to prepare master plans

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THE Sudanese Government has asked the Economic Planning Unit's assistance to draw up a development plan based on the Malaysian model to enable Khartoum to switch from a predominantly agriculture-based economy to one that stresses industrial development.

Sudanese Investment and Industry Minister Dr Abdel Halim Al Mutafi told the New Straits Times that Sudan wanted to learn from the Malaysian experience in its bid to diversify its economy, especially in identifying and embarking on industrial and high-tech projects.

Abdel Halim, who was on a three-day visit to Malaysia from Nov 12 to 15, where he held talks with several government agencies and the private sector, said his Government wanted to use revenue derived from the petroleum sector to spur other industrial activities.

He said during his discussion with EPU officials he had expressed his Government's desire to emulate the series of master plans adopted by Malaysia since independence which has brought progress and better living standards for the people.

"I have asked for EPU's help in this area and they are very keen. On my return to Khartoum, I will be sending an official request on the matter.

"We hope a joint team involving Malaysian and Sudanese officials could be established to help draw up a strategic development plan for Sudan for the next 25 years based on the framework of previous master plans implemented in Malaysia," he said.

Abdel Halim said during his previous visit to Kuala Lumpur in May, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had given him an assurance that Malaysian agencies would do everything possible to help Sudan.

He said during this visit he learnt more about Malaysia's Multi-media Super Corridor concept and wants closer co-operation in the information technology sector so that more Sudanese would be computer and IT literate.

"During my talks with your business leaders, I explained the need for investment in the power, pharmaceutical, telecommunications, aerospace, car manufacturing, mining, ports and agriculture-related activities.

"There are already Malaysian entrepreneurs in Sudan and with this visit I hope more joint ventures will be launched which can bring mutual benefits to both countries," he said.

He stressed that the energy sector was crucial to Sudan's development and there is a need to establish independent power producers to enable the country to embark on high-tech and other industries.

On education, he hoped joint projects could be established so that concepts such as smart schools and introduction of computer studies in the curriculum could be introduced in Sudan.

He said the political climate in Sudan is improving and the political parties have begun campaigning for the polls scheduled for late next month.

"In spite of the distance between Malaysia and Sudan, there are many common things between the two countries," he said.

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