

22/08/2001

Frequent changing of governments `detrimental`

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said changing governments frequently could be detrimental to the country as it would affect investments and the economy.

He hopes that African nations would not change governments frequently.

"So we hope the governments are not changed too frequently ... it will be very unsettling because sometimes when you change governments, they want to renegotiate the terms of their investments in the country.

"And of course, it is not going to be better than the last one and therefore, people feel very jittery whenever there is a change in government.

"If there's any one advice I could give, please don't change governments. I am very comfortable (with present governments) ...," he said when launching the Africa Trade Insurance Agency on Monday.

Speaking about Malaysia, the Prime Minister said: "We don't change governments ... we don't have coup d'etat so far. Changing governments is not always for the good. In Uganda, it is for the good. In some countries, it could be for the worse.

"Of course, there's a time when there is a need to change governments. One newspaper reporter asked yesterday whether the present heads of government were not happy with the Press when they were in the Opposition and the Press supported them.

"Well, when they were in the Opposition, the foreign Press supported them ... but once they form the government, I cannot understand why they cannot continue to support.

"But it seems they don't like established governments. They want to be in the Opposition all the time. So we cannot oblige them."

The African Trade Insurance Agency is expected to promote trade transactions worth about US\$800 million (RM3 billion) over five years and up to US\$5 billion over 10 years.

It was launched during one of the sessions of Monday's Global 2001 Smart Partnership International Dialogue.

Dr Mahathir said the agency should have the membership of every African country.

"In insurance, if more people participate in an insurance scheme, the lower will be the premium and the lower will be the risk.

"So there is room for expansion in this agency," he said.

Dr Mahathir also explained on the insurance schemes and its functions in Malaysia which were run by the private sector.

He said despite the country's image, Malaysia had been able to attract foreign direct investments because once people visited Malaysia, they would change their minds.

"And we make sure that they will change their mind by being extremely nice to foreigners. We are extremely nice people. If we think that these people are going to give us money, we should be extra nice to them.

"That has enabled us to attract a lot of FDI," he said.

Dr Mahathir said despite the adverse publicity given to Malaysia, foreign investors did not change their minds because they knew "we honour the words that we give them".

(END)