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Mahathir-Marketing

MAHATHIR HITS OUT AT LAZY LOCAL MANUFACTURERS

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

KAMPALA, Aug 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has hit out at relatively "lazy" Malaysian manufacturers who took the easy way out by leaving the marketing of their products to others, thus resulting in their goods being imported by foreign countries through third parties.

"This is something that happens all the time, which is why we must learn to market our products ourselves," he said after launching the Malaysian Business Centre here Saturday.

"Our people (Malaysian manufacturers) are lazy, if they can they let others do the marketing, they just produce, where the goods go to they don't care," he said.

In Africa, many Malaysian-made goods are imported via Singapore or Dubai.

The prime minister, who is here to attend the Global 2001 Smart Partnership International Dialogue, said more people should realise that if they undertook their own marketing, they stood to gain more in terms of profits.

Also present at the launch of the centre was Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, the Malaysian High Commissioner to Uganda, Ali Abdullah, ministers, government officials and private sector officials.

The centre is managed by Malaysian Business Centre (U) Ltd (MBC), a 60:40 joint venture between Masscorp Trading Sdn Bhd and a Malaysian businessman, Sekaran Vellasamy, who is its managing director.

MBC is the first overseas office of its kind belonging to Masscorp Trading, a subsidiary of Masscorp Bhd, which in turn is a consortium largely owned by Malaysian corporate leaders aimed at boosting South-South trade and investment linkages.

Dr Mahathir, who visited Yemen prior to coming to Uganda, said Malaysian goods were readily acceptable in Yemen and Uganda, but the problem was that "they are not sold directly."

He cited how a centre for the distribution of Malaysian goods was being set up in Bahrain, which would be able to identify importers and agents "who could then market things for us."

For the Ugandan market, Malaysian manufacturers could undertake their own marketing but it would be better to go through one organisation such as Masscorp since it has full (Malaysian) government backing, he said.

Earlier, in his speech, he called on Malaysian businesses not just to sell to Uganda and other African markets, but to try and help the local people improve their incomes by developing their businesses.

He said there should be a transfer of skills through training and development of local businesses as well as job creation.

"That is the way to go, we must not just come in and make a lot of money for ourselves and go out," said Dr Mahathir.

"We must help the local people improve their incomes and this is already happening. Wherever we go, such as in Namibia, we have helped their businesses to develop," he said.

He cited how Malaysia in the early days gained substantially from Japanese, Taiwanese, South Korean and American investments which in turn created numerous jobs and enriched Malaysians and improved the country's purchasing power.

With greater prosperity, Malaysia bought more from these markets and

the same should now be emulated by Malaysian businessmen when they traded or invested with lesser developed countries.

Rather than being selfish, Dr Mahathir said, Malaysian businesses have a duty to help people in developing countries by adhering to the principle of "prosper thy neighbour", which has been adopted by South-South countries.

"Don't just wait to sell, draw on your resources to invest in countries like Uganda in areas such as light assembly operations," he said.

They could over time help in skills training as well as in product development which later could lead to Ugandans being able to supply their neighbouring countries with higher quality goods.

"We will not lose because if Uganda becomes richer, they will buy more from us, it's a win-win formula," he said.

Asked whether Africa could be an alternative market for Malaysia's traditional markets given the increasing competition from Chinese products, Dr Mahathir said there would be "competition wherever you go."

"We must learn how to compete with them. We should produce goods of the highest quality with good packaging and promotions," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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