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Malaysian investors in Cambodia told to help develop nation

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday called on Malaysian businessmen investing in Cambodia to assist in the progress of the nation in line with the Government's policy to prosper its neighbours.

Speaking at the opening of the RM152 million Cambodia Pte Ltd's 35MW Diesel Engine Power Plant here, Dr Mahathir said apart from profiting from the businesses, Malaysian businessmen had a social responsibility to the people and Government of Cambodia.

"It is also necessary for our businessmen here to focus on social work and care for the people of Cambodia. We must help in their education and help in meeting the needs of the people."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysian companies, with their experience, should impart their expertise and skills to the people of Cambodia and help them overcome their social problems.

The Prime Minister emphasised that prospering Malaysia's neighbours would greatly help to improve the economy.

"Having a prosperous neighbour will result in better trade between us and our neighbours.

"We realise that apart from making a profit, it is also important to help our neighbour prosper," he said.

Praising Malaysian companies for their contribution to Cambodia, he said they should use their experience to help Cambodian companies undertake projects outside their shores.

Dr Mahathir said he was impressed with the current development in Cambodia, and hoped Malaysian and Cambodian companies could tap the opportunities and work closely to develop the country.

"When I visited Cambodia in 1994, it was deserted. Today, there are more cars on the roads and more hotels. It is quite clear that Cambodia has progressed tremendously."

Dr Mahathir also advised Malaysian companies to help Cambodia to develop its tourism.

Explaining Malaysia's success in tourism promotion, he said with Cambodia's vast attractions, businessmen could invest in developing hotels and tourist sites.

Also present at the ceremony were Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia Sar Kheng, Cambodia Secretary of State of the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy, and Leader Universal Holdings Bhd chairman Tan Sri Razali Ismail.

The plant, located at Chak Angre district, was incorporated in 1995.

It is a joint venture by three Malaysian companies - Leader Universal Holdings (60 per cent stake), Delcom Services Sdn Bhd (20 per cent) and Grand United Holdings Berhad (20 per cent).

The Power Purchase Agreement was executed between the joint-venture company and Electricite Du Cambodge in 1994.

Under the PPA it will generate 35MW to the Phnom Penh transmission grid.

Later, Dr Mahathir met members of the Malaysian community at a hotel here after a briefing by Wisma Putra officials on the 8th Asean Summit, which begins at the Inter-Continental Hotel tomorrow.

After the meeting with the Malaysians, Dr Mahathir attend a working dinner with other Asean leaders.

It is learnt that the leaders last night also discussed the terrorism issue.

The terrorism declaration, which will be issued by the heads of

Government, would express concern over the travel advisories issued by several developed countries following the bombings in Bali and Zamboanga.

The advisories affect tourism in the region which is seen as a source of revenue for countries in Asean.

The leaders are also expected to express sympathy to the victims of the attacks.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir was met on arrival at the Pochentong International Airport by the Cambodian Minister in Charge of The Office of the Council of Ministers, Sok An, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Malaysian embassy staff and Cambodian officials.

Dr Mahathir toured the newly renovated airport which was privatised in 1995 to Malaysia's Muhibbah Engineering (M) Bhd and its French and Cambodian partners.

The consortium has been awarded a 25-year concession for the development and management of the airport operations.

In 2000 it also took over the management of the Siem Reap Airport which leads to the famed Angkor Wat.

About RM323 million has been spent on the Pochentong airport, which has a built-up area of 22,000 sq metres and a handling capacity of 1.8 million passengers a year.

The Prime Minister also attended a reception with members of the Malaysian community in Cambodia in conjunction with Deepavali celebrations.