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Mahathir-Reservoir  
DR M VISITS GREAT MAN-MADE RIVER

By: Khairdzir Mohd Yunus

BENGHAZI, April 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Friday visited the Great Man-made River Project, dubbed the eighth wonder of the world.

The project, which involves a whopping investment of US\$33.69 billion (RM128.02 billion) over a 50-year period, will help solve Libya's water problems.

Libya is said to be one of the driest places on earth.

Located in Suluq, about 50km from the City of Benghazi, the Great Man-made River Project in the Sahara Desert is acclaimed as the greatest civil engineering work the world has ever seen.

The project, which started on Aug 28, 1991, is a massive network of water transportation and distribution systems.

It will comprise 1,300 wells drilled into the Sahara Desert, pumping 6.5 million cubic metres of water per day to provide over 1,000 litres of water daily to each Libyan citizen.

The project will also help Libya free 159,000 hectares of its land from drought.

The five million tonnes of cement used to make the pipes would be sufficient to build a concrete road from the city of Sirt in Libya to Mumbai in India.

The pre-stressed steel wire used in manufacturing the pipes could circle the earth 280 times.

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi mooted the project after underground water was discovered during an oil exploration exercise in the 1970s.

The three-phase project will comprise five reservoirs with a total storage capacity of 54.8 million cubic metres.

Dr Mahathir also visited one of the reservoirs which has been completed, the Omar Muktar Reservoir, and another which is still under construction.

He flew into Benghazi, about 1,000km from the Libyan capital of Tripoli, on a chartered Malaysia Airlines B777-200 aircraft and returned to Tripoli the same day.

The Prime Minister is leading a 185-member delegation comprising Cabinet members, officials and businessmen on a week-long visit to Morocco, Libya and Bahrain.

In Benghazi, Dr Mahathir's entourage also visited the tomb of Libya's freedom fighter and patriot Omar Muktar, known as the Lion of the Desert, who was hanged there by the Italian army.

The business group, however, remained in Tripoli where its members attended meetings with their Libyan counterparts.

Dr Mahathir later attended a dinner with Malaysian and local businessmen in Tripoli.

The Prime Minister will end his three-day visit to Libya on Saturday and depart for Bahrain.

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