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M'SIA TO CONTRIBUTE TO LEBANON RECONSTRUCTION

By: Wan A. Hulaimi

PARIS, Nov 23 (Bernama) -- Malaysia can contribute to Lebanon's reconstruction programme with its expertise in IT development and tourism, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said here.

Syed Hamid, who is accompanying Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to the one-day conference on the Reconstruction of Lebanon under the auspices of the French presidency at the Elysee Palace, said that as Lebanon wanted to use the private sector as its engine for growth, Malaysia had a lot to offer from its experience.

He said Dr Mahathir was specially invited to this pledging conference by Lebanese President Rafiq Hariri who went to Kuala Lumpur to extend his personal invitation.

Eighteen countries are attending the conference including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Denmark and the Gulf States, with 8 regional and international investment and monetary agencies including the World Bank and the IMF also taking part.

After 15 years of war Lebanon, once a thriving financial and business centre, is now trying to rebuild on long term commitments from supporting countries and agencies, Syed Hamid said.

"Only countries that are in a position to help are invited. Lebanon is not interested in short term high interest loans, but is looking to long term commitments on more favourable terms," he said.

Dr Mahathir was welcomed by Mr Hariri on his arrival at a premier hotel in the city centre Friday afternoon.

He leaves Paris for London tonight for a connecting flight to Kuala Lumpur Sunday.

-- BERNAMA

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