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MAHATHIR-NAMIBIA

DR MAHATHIR WANTS M'SIANS TO INVEST IN NAMIBIA

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

EZULWINI (Swaziland), Aug 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on Malaysian corporates to invest in Namibia now that they are in a better position to undertake reverse investments having recovered from the 1997/98 financial crisis.

"We had a lot of plans before the currency crisis to work in Namibia, but because of the crisis, we were not able to carry out those plans," he said.

"But the situation is better now (and) they would like us to go back there," he told reporters after bilateral talks with Namibian President Dr Sam Nujoma on the sidelines of the on-going Global 2003 Smart Partnership International Dialogue here Thursday.

Ezulwini is situated a few kilometres outside the capital city of Mbabane.

Dr Mahathir said that among the areas which were potentially lucrative included the construction sector, farming, fishing, mining of precious stones, copper mining, as well as oil and gas exploration.

He said that there were also business opportunities for textile firms in view of the success chalked up by Ramatex Bhd, which by the year end, would employ close to 10,000 people compared with its humble beginnings in 1998.

Ramatex Bhd is the largest Malaysian investor in Namibia.

Dr Mahathir also gave Dr Nujoma an assurance that Malaysia would send a delegation to Namibia to undertake specific studies into potential areas that could enhance bilateral ties including trade and investment opportunities.

Asked on the outcome of the first day of deliberations at the dialogue particularly pertaining to international security and superpowers resorting to unilateralism as evidenced by the US invading Iraq despite international condemnation, he said:

"What is obvious is that each country fear that they may become the target and as such they want to have a common stand to overcome the United Nations' weaknesses."

"We want to restrengthen the United Nations," Dr Mahathir said.

Minister of Rural Development, Datuk Azmi Khalid, who also attended the dialogue and the bilateral talks between Malaysia and Namibia, explained that the African countries were not happy with what had transpired (in Iraq) after the US war on Iraq.

They themselves knew that the reasons given to attack Iraq were weak and not backed-up by strong facts, he said.

Azmi said that the dialogue hosted by Swaziland has now transformed from just discussions on economic and business pack to focusing on political pack so that there would be political strength and a more united African countries who could speak in one voice to protest against the unjust of two or three superpowers controlling the world.

Today, the African countries have decided that each country should have its own domestic strength, Azmi said

"Only then will there be a pact among them where they will become stronger and can speak out more distinctly against any inappropriate actions," he said.

However, the African countries themselves are finding difficulties in being united, and as such they could not reach into any agreement.

"But today, smart international dialogue is moving towards this," Azmi said.

The African countries are also aware that foreign countries' manipulation could bring about disunity among them.

But the majority of those attending today's event had a common stand namely to be united and the need to have domestic strength.

Foreign powers are aware that Africa is rich with natural resources and that if they are disunited, the African countries would continue to be exploited and this would be unfair for their citizens.

The minister said that the dialogue in Swaziland has reached a more heated level namely a more obvious political awareness.

Azmi said that Dr Mahathir gave an assurance to Dr Nujoma that Malaysia would provide training to Namibians as well as transfer of technology to African countries including Namibia. -- BERNAMA

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