

Malaysia offers to help develop Zimbabwe

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MALAYSIA has offered to assist Zimbabwe in its economic development. The offer was made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe during their hour-long meeting.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia is prepared to assist and promote Zimbabwe among businessmen and investors in the Asian region.

Malaysia is providing assistance in the setting up of an investment promotion office similar to the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority. A delegation from Zimbabwe has visited Malaysia to also study its land resettlement schemes for adaptation and implementation in Zimbabwe.

President Mugabe was impressed with the success achieved by Malaysia in its Felda resettlement schemes. He visited a Felda scheme in 1989 during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kuala Lumpur.

Datuk Renji Satiah, deputy secretary general (economics), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told the Malaysian press that the two leaders are in agreement on a number of issues.

They discussed issues ranging from the agenda of CHOGM, the en-

vironment, democracy, the latest developments in the world including eastern Europe, forest fires and the Malaysian proposal for the setting up of an East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC).

In the promotion of greater bilateral contacts, the question of direct air links was raised; at present there are no air links between Malaysia and Zimbabwe except through third countries.

The proposal for Malaysia Airlines to fly onwards from Mauritius to Harare is difficult as the Mauritius Government does not allow fifth freedom rights. Therefore, for direct flights, the question of load will have to be considered as it will require larger aircraft.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Badawi is expected to meet Zimbabwean Transport and National Supplies Minister Dennis Norman to work out the details of the proposal.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said that it is important for the Commonwealth to be more cohesive in facing international issues such as Third World debt. Member countries should stand firm, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, noting that the issue had been discussed in detail by the finance ministers in Kuala

Lumpur last week.

He also referred to the proposal made by British Prime Minister John Major for debt relief, now known as the Trinidad and Tobago terms, which provides for relief to developing countries. Only the US is opposed to the proposal. Yet the US has used even better terms for debt relief in Poland and Egypt.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added that the same formula should be applicable to all. Those who can afford to pay should repay their debts and those countries that cannot afford to repay should be helped.

The Prime Minister also spoke at length on democracy and told President Mugabe that Malaysia with its unique ethnic composition requires its own way of dealing with the situation. The Western views of democracy cannot be imposed on other countries as the situation differs from one country to another.

In a developing world, the process of democratisation has to be a gradual one. If the Western concept is imposed it can give rise to situations similar to that in the Soviet Union and Romania, where there is a semblance of democracy but no food and no improvement in the standard of living of the people.

On the Commonwealth, the Prime Minister briefed President Mugabe on the high level appraisal group's work. He said the meeting will take into account the very important changes taking place in the world and in eastern Europe and the impact they have on Commonwealth countries. The proposals of the group are expected to be incorporated in the Harare declaration.

Meanwhile, Datuk Abdullah met his Zimbabwean counterpart, Dr Nathan Shamuyanza, to discuss bilateral issues.

Datuk Abdullah later told the press that the two countries will sign an economic, scientific and technical cooperation agreement.