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Mahathir - South Africa

MALAYSIA WILL STEP UP TRADE WITH SOUTH AFRICA, MAHATHIR

from Zainoor Sulaiman

HARARE, May 1 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will step up trade and economic cooperation with South Africa and also make investments to help that country develop and progress after the all-race elections and the installing of a democratic government.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he discussed these matters with African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela and President F.W.de Klerk during his brief visit to South Africa yesterday.

President de Klerk and Mandela welcomed Malaysia's proposals, Dr Mahathir told Malaysian newsmen covering his five-day visit to Zimbabwe.

Dr Mahathir met Mandela for two hours in Johannesburg and spent half an hour with de Klerk in Pretoria.

He said Malaysia would also provide training facilities to South African officials if there was a request for such facilities from the new government.

Dr Mahathir said the two leaders had invited him to make an official visit to South Africa and he had also extended invitations to the two to make a similar visit to Malaysia. -- more

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The Prime Minister said he did not notice any tension in South Africa during his visit and he was told that the general election was proceeding smoothly.

Mandela and De Klerk had agreed to resolve any irregularities through discussions, he said.

Asked whether Malaysia would send a high level delegation for the swearing-in of the new South African President next week, Dr Mahathir said he would not be attending the ceremony as he would be in China then.

However he would send a representative for the swearing-in ceremony.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah and Foreign Ministry Deputy Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Halim Ali during his visit to South Africa.

Dr Mahathir left for Morocco today for an unofficial visit.

"I am visiting Morocco to see the new mosque in Casablanca," he said.

Dr Mahathir will fly on to Paris on Wednesday where he will hold talks with French Prime Minister Fdouard Balladur. -- Bernama

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