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Entrepreneurial, manpower training for S. Africans

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Malaysia has offered to provide entrepreneurial and manpower training to South Africa in a bid to improve the skills and livelihood of indigenous Africans.

South African President Nelson Mandela, impressed with the high-level of technical and managerial skills and entrepreneurial know-ledge among the people here, has sought Malaysia's assistance to impart some of the knowledge to South Africans.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during his discussions with Mandela offered to provide such training since Malaysia has been successful in developing many entrepreneurs, especially among the Bumiputeras.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who briefed newsmen on the discussions between the two leaders and the bilateral talks between delegations from the two countries said since South Africa was developing all its sectors, Malaysia wanted to become a partner in the development.

"We are willing to assist in the training of the South African people and investing in the country to help it develop," he said.

This morning, Malaysia and South Africa signed a trade agreement and an agreement on Merchant Shipping and Related Maritime matters.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz signed the trade agreement with South African deputy Trade and Industry Minister Mrs P. Mlambo-Ngcuka while Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and South African Minister for Mineral and Energy Affairs P. Maduna signed the Merchant Shipping and Related Maritime matters agreement.

The trade agreement facilitates expansion of trade, economic and industrial co-operation on a long term basis and is aimed at stimulating the flow of trade, investments and individual business initiatives.

Among the measures to be adopted include granting each other Most Favoured Nation treatment in matters relating to customs duties and foreign trade formalities and the establishment of a Joint Trade Committee to discuss measures to enhance two-way trade.

The agreement would also facilitate participation at each other's trade fairs and exhibitions with exemption from customs duties and other charges for products displayed.

Mandela arrived yesterday with a 115-member delegation, including ministers, senior officials and businessmen, for a five-day visit after visiting Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines.

Abdullah said Mandela wanted more Malaysian businessmen to invest in South Africa and stressed that peace and stability in his country would continue to be maintained.

Mandela had said media reports of a high crime rate in South Africa has changed with crime rate now being reduced and the situation continuously being improved.

South Africa has also called for co-operation from the Malaysian private sector for joint-ventures in the telecommunications, construction, port services and other sectors.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir had urged South Africa to reduce the tariffs imposed on palm oil which are higher than the tariffs imposed on other vegetable oils.

Currently Pretoria imposes 400 Rand (RM256) as tariff for palm oil compared to 170 Rand for other vegetable oils and Malaysia wants the

tariff for palm oil to be lowered or standardised with that of other vegetable oils.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir and Mandela also discussed co-operation between Asean and South African Development Community and both leaders hoped the co-operation would be continued and improved.

He said Asean's experience in successfully implementing Small and Medium Scale Industries in the region could also be used to help South Africa embark on similar ventures.

South Africa remains Malaysia's largest trading partner in Africa and last year's total trade stood at RM1.36 billion which is an increase of 14.3 per cent over the 1995 figures.

Malaysia's exports which amounted to RM719 million included palm oil, wood, rubber, telecommunication and sound equipment, office machinery and data processing machines.

Malaysia's imports totalled RM643 million comprising gold, iron and steel bars, cereals, paper, paperboard and fertilisers.

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