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Greater cooperation with Mozambique pledged

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THE governments of Mozambique and Malaysia have expressed a common desire to establish and develop cooperation in the economic, technical and scientific fields, visiting Mozambique President Joaquim Alberto Chissano says.

The energy, transport and communications, agriculture, industrial and technology-based sectors are some of the areas identified, he told a news conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The initiative will be implemented by the government institutions but the main impetus will come from the private sector. "It is our belief that the private sector can play an important role in the development process of Mozambique," he said.

For this reason, Chissano said, he has brought with him a delegation 17 Mozambican businessmen to establish contacts with their Malaysian counterparts in the banking, finance, industry, agriculture, trade and transport sectors, among others.

"We have observed from our visits to the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department, the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority and the Proton plant the dynamism of the Malaysian private sector and the importance of Government-private sector relations.

"We were given a full account of how Malaysia has transformed itself from an agriculture-based country to an industrial one," he said.

On whether Mozambique will model its privatization process after Malaysia, Chissano said: "There is a lot to learn, but we are not going to apply everything because the conditions in the two countries are different."

Chissano said Mozambique's relations with Malaysia transcend the entire range of bilateral goals.

"Our interests are rooted in the promotion of South-South cooperation which we both believe in and practise. Hence, our visit here is also aimed at promoting such cooperation," he said.

"Mozambique and Malaysia have been promoting South-South cooperation in regional and transcontinental institutions of cooperation of which we are members, such as the Organisation of Islamic Conference, the Commonwealth and the newly-created Indian Ocean Rim," he added.

Chissano and his delegation leave for home today, after a four-day visit to Malaysia.

"We are certain that our goal of establishing and reinforcing bilateral economic, technical and scientific ties have been met. What is left is for our government institutions and business communities to follow up," he said.

"I have also invited your Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to visit Mozambique... the dates for the visit will be established through appropriate diplomatic channels," the President said.

Chissano said his Government will also be contacting the Malaysian Embassy in Harare, Zimbabwe, with a view to creating "conditions for a good bilateral relationship." Malaysia has yet to open an embassy in Mozambique.

"The embassy can help alert us of contracts which are 'not useful' to our bilateral relations," he said, referring to news reports on Friday in which Dr Mahathir advised host countries to verify with the respective Malaysian embassies or missions the capabilities of Malaysian companies

which offer their services.

This is to ensure that Malaysian companies vying for projects or entering into memorandums of understanding are fully capable of fulfilling their obligations.

Chissano said no Malaysian company has invested in the country so far.

"We have however established contacts with Malaysians who have expressed an interest in investing in Mozambique. They are looking at projects in the tourism, hotel construction and agriculture sectors," he said, adding that he expects "many more proposals to come from Malaysia."

"Indeed, a group of Malaysian businessmen will be visiting Mozambique next month."

Asked whether the enormous interest expressed by Malaysian investors will pose a problem for Mozambique, Chissano said: "Competition is healthy for the country's economy... I think it is necessary to open up the economy and we are planning to visit other countries as well."

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