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Kenya seeks our help in privatisation

Rashid Yusof in Nairobi

KENYAN President Daniel T. Arap Moi has sought Malaysia's participation in the privatisation of key sectors and wants his senior ministers to work closely with Malaysia in efforts to make the country the economic model for Africa.

Moi, who was very impressed with what he saw when he visited Malaysia, had extended an invitation through visiting Economic Adviser to the Government Tun Daim Zainuddin, for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, to visit Kenya this year.

In his fifth stop, on a visit across Africa, Daim was given a warm welcome by Moi, as was the case in his previous stops.

In Guinea, for example, Daim and delegation arrived on a Sunday. But President Lansana Conte went to his office, with his staff on hand, to receive them.

When the delegation was leaving, Conte went early in the morning to the villa where the Malaysians stayed, to say goodbye.

In Morocco, the first stop, Ghana, the third destination, and Uganda, Daim and delegation were also warmly welcomed, signifying the seriousness of the hosts to work with the Malaysians.

Moi, in gestures that signified his admiration for Malaysia, wanted Daim to advise Kenya on its economic revival.

He told Daim who called on him at the State House, that he would give personal attention to companies recommended by Daim to participate in Kenya's proposed privatisation of its key sectors.

They include posts and telecommunications, power, hotel, highway, garbage disposal and commuter system.

The former Finance Minister said he promised the President he would look into the matter.

The President said apart from the priority areas, Kenya could provide land for Malaysian investors to grow rice for export. Rice is not the staple diet of Kenyans.

Kenya's biggest foreign exchange earner is tourism with its beaches and wildlife, while horticulture has moved to number three.

Moi also told Daim that conditions and restrictions imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were almost stifling Kenya's economy.

"In giving loans, the President said the international bodies even sought to dictate matters, like the award of contracts which he said would deprive Kenya of its sovereignty."

Moi cited a US\$50 million (RM124 million) power barge project in the port city of Mombassa awarded to a Malaysian-American joint venture, as an example of avoiding the interference of the international bodies.

Daim, leading a Malaysian business delegation on a whirlwind visit across Africa, was originally scheduled to fly to Moi's farm, some 160km away, but the President said it was only proper for him to receive Daim in the capital.

Daim first met Finance Minister Musalia Mudavadi, and a close aide of Moi, Minister of State in the office of the President, Nicholas Biwott, before meeting with the President.

Among Moi's other requests were that Malaysia establish a High Commission in Nairobi, and that Malaysia Airlines fly here.

Although it was a Sunday, the President was ready to see Daim at 9am at

the State House and insisted on personally taking the latter on a tour of the Nairobi National Park.

He even hosted a lunch at the park's view point, a gesture which impressed the Malaysian delegation.

Then Moi, who has been President for 19 years, brought Daim and his delegation to his personal rose farm, which produces 20 million roses a year.

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