

07 MAY 1997

Mahathir-SA

MAHATHIR ARRIVES TO RECEIVE TOP SOUTH AFRICAN AWARD

By: E.Sivabalan

CAPE TOWN, May 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here today for a one-day visit to South Africa, the final leg of his week-long tour of three southern African nations.

Dr Mahathir had earlier visited the republics of Malawi from May 1-2 and Botswana from May 3-6. While in Botswana, he also attended the three-day Southern Africa International Dialogue on Smart Partnership which began on May 4 in Kasane, about 1,300km north of Gaborone, the capital of Botswana.

Accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, the prime minister arrived at the Ysterplaat air force base here at about 10.45am (4.45pm Malaysian time).

They were received by South African acting Foreign Minister Puan Stella Sigcau.

During his brief visit here, Dr Mahathir is scheduled to receive the gold award of the Order of Good Hope (Class One) from President Nelson Mandela at "Genanenda", his official residence.

It is South Africa's highest award to honour citizens of other countries who have contributed towards the well-being of the people of South Africa.

Dr Mahathir, who made his first official visit to South Africa in August 1995, would then launch "Serting House", the headquarters of Malaysian-based Serting Berhad.

He is also scheduled to witness the signing of a joint-venture agreement between CN Asia Corporation Berhad and Dorbyl Heavy Engineering of South Africa.

Dr Mahathir is expected to depart Cape Town for Kuala Lumpur at 5.20pm (11.20pm Malaysian time). He is expected to reach home at 1.30pm on May 8.

Apart from Serting, other major Malaysian companies which have invested heavily in South Africa are Petronas (with its initial 1.9 billion Rand (about RM1 billion) 30 per cent equity in South African oil company Engen), Mycom Berhad, Country Heights, Sime Darby, Malaysian Resources Corporation Berhad (MRCB) and SungeiWay Group.

During Mandela's visit to Malaysia last March, three more Malaysian companies signed separate agreements with their South African counterparts, two involving a combined investment of RM2.63 billion.

The agreements were between Jaringan Infrastructure Sdn Bhd and Plessey of South Africa, Trakprops 31 Pty Ltd and ABI Construction Sdn Bhd and MK Malefane Entertainment (Pty) Ltd and Diversified Systems Sdn Bhd.

Also Telekom Malaysia Berhad has recently won a bid to acquire 30 per cent stake in Telkom SA for US\$1.261 billion (RM2.127 billion).

For the first nine months last year, total trade between South Africa and Malaysia stood at US\$389 million (about RM968.9 million), up 3.9 per cent over the same period in 1995.

Malaysia's total exports to South Africa during that period amounted to US\$216 million (about RM537.8 million) as compared to imports from South Africa totalling only US\$174 million (about RM433.26 million), reflecting a trade surplus in favour of Malaysia.

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