

07/03/1997

Malaysia's trade with S. Africa will grow, says King

K.P. Waran; Satwant Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar said South Africa had all the ingredients of an African tiger economy and the Malaysian private sector found the country to be one of the most attractive investment destinations.

"While trade between our two countries is still relatively modest, the potential for growth is evident," he said at a State banquet he hosted for South African President Nelson Mandela at Istana Negara.

He said Malaysia followed with keen interest the initiatives of South Africa towards co-operation and integration between neighbours.

"Like Asean, we believe that South Africa's integration with the countries of Southern African Development Community will be a model of confidence building, peace and prosperity.

"No country or region can prosper in a vacuum. And no country developing or developed, should be left to its own fate.

"We are confident that South Africa which has already impressed the world with its capacity to initiate peaceful change, will now be able to usher in peace and prosperity in Africa as a whole."

He said Malaysia would endeavour to co-operate with South Africa in every way, particularly in the establishment of bilateral and regional linkages and added that both sides must strive for co-operation between Asean and the SADC.

Also present at the banquet were Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah, Mandela's companion Graca Machel, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, and Cabinet ministers.

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

He was accorded an official welcome at the Parliament Square where he was greeted by Tuanku Ja'afar and Tuanku Najihah.

Also present were Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah.

The national anthems of Malaysia and South Africa were played amidst a 21-gun salute by the 41st Ceremonial Artillery Battery.

Mandela inspected a guard of honour mounted by four officers and 103 soldiers of the First Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment led by Mejar Hamdi Abdul Rahman and was later introduced to Ministers, Deputy Ministers and members of the diplomatic corp.

Tuanku Ja'afar said Malaysia admired the South African Government's high sense of commitment to build a future based on justice and the sharing of the hopes, aspirations and ideals of the African people.

He said over such a short period since the establishment of the new South Africa, new social institutions had replaced flawed ones while the integration process was taking place in schools and universities and the economy too was undergoing a comprehensive restructuring.

He said Malaysia welcomed the birth of a multiracial and democratic South Africa and Mandela's autobiography Long Walk to Freedom was a source of inspiration to mankind.

Describing Mandela as the "personification of indomitable spirit of Man", Tuanku Ja'afar said the president's patience, forbearance, willingness to sacrifice and the tenacity and singularity of purpose demonstrated in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties in order

to overcome the oppressive apartheid system was indeed awe-inspiring.

"The victory which crowned your struggle must be one of this century's greatest achievements.

As a result, South Africa has become a country where regardless of their race or colour, people can live as equals.

"While the road ahead may hold many challenges, we are confident that with your vision, wisdom and determination South Africans will enter an era of peace, stability, prosperity and social justice for all," he said.

(END)