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Malaysia offers to help African states resolve problems

Kamarul Yunus

MALAYSIA has offered to play a role in efforts to resolve problems facing African nations, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said he made the offer during his meeting with South Africa's President Nelson Mandela in Cape Town on Thursday, the last leg of his week-long visit to three African nations.

"Mandela was playing a major role in Africa and was involved in efforts to resolve many of Africa's problems. We discussed various problems faced by the African nations and whether we can play a role.

"If we can help in anyway, we will help," Dr Mahathir told a press conference upon his arrival at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang from the trip that had taken him to Malawi, Botswana and South Africa.

In South Africa, Dr Mahathir was bestowed the republic's highest award, "Order of Good Hope (First Class)" in appreciation of his effective leadership in the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and other international fora.

Dr. Mahathir told reporters Malawi, Botswana and South Africa provide greater opportunities for Malaysian companies to invest and foster trade ties.

"During my official visit to Malawi, they asked us to invest and cooperate so that they can use Malaysia as a model for their development.

"Malawi is a poor country mainly because for about 30 years, the country was being ruled by one man who seemed to ignore the livelihood of the people.

"It was not until recently that the ruling government started to have close relation with its people and try to develop the country.

"I think there is vast potential for investment in Malawi but it needs a substantial sum of investment, and especially from foreign investors," he added.

In his visit to Botswana, Dr Mahathir said the country also hoped for investments from Malaysia to provide jobs for its people.

"Botswana is very developed in producing diamonds and this has helped the country to develop although 20 per cent of the country's population is unemployed. They also need investment from Malaysia," he added.

During the Southern African International Dialogue (SAID) in Kasane, Botswana, the participating countries agreed to adopt Malaysia's development approach and called for exchange in ideas to assist developing the Southern African nations.

"The dialogue was very useful in identifying the problems faced by the Southern African countries and the approach to be adopted to develop these countries.

"In fact, most of the participants of SAID had participated in the Langkawi International Dialogue (LID) and this LID has become a model for SAID," he said.

He added that the dialogue in South Africa had received encouraging response, especially with the presence of at least eight heads of government and representatives from European countries.

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