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Mandela arrives for a five-day state visit

SOUTH African President Nelson Mandela enters the final leg of his tour of four South-East Asian nations with a state visit to Malaysia beginning today. The five-day visit is aimed at strengthening the already strong ties and economic cooperation between the two nations.

Mandela arrives from Singapore with a 90-member trade and senior officials delegation, which includes two ministers. He will spend three days in Kuala Lumpur and then visit Langkawi before flying home to Pretoria on Monday. He had earlier been to the Philippines and Brunei.

The South African leader will be received by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport at Subang and accorded a red carpet welcome at the Parliament Square.

The visit is expected to be highlighted by the signing of several agreements between the two governments following a delegations meeting at the Prime Minister's Department tomorrow.

It is not immediately known what agreements will be signed but those on tourism and air travel would likely be among them.

During his visit, Mandela will visit the Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional's plant in Shah Alam as well as the Kuala Lumpur City Centre Twin Towers.

The South African delegation will also attend a briefing at the Economic Planning Unit at the Prime Minister's Department today.

Mandela has also been scheduled to deliver a keynote address at the Second Malaysia-South Africa Business Forum and speak at a talk organised by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations. He will attend a luncheon hosted by the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Malaysia as well.

Malaysia is probably the top South-East Asian customer of South Africa's defence industry. In addition, Malaysians have invested heavily in South Africa's housing and tourism industries.

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