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Mandela ends visit on note of success and warm friendship

LANGKAWI, Mon. - With a warm hug, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today bade farewell to South African President Nelson Mandela at the Langkawi International Airport.

The warmth between the two leaders was evident as Mandela boarded a South African Air Force Falcon at 10am after a successful five-day visit, including two days in Langkawi.

Also there to bid the South African leader a safe journey were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Minister-in-attendance Datuk Leo Moggie.

Mandela, taken up by the Malaysian hospitality, shook hands with or greeted everyone with a "Hello, How are you? Nice to meet you", including airport and Customs staff.

Malaysia was the last leg of Mandela's Southeast Asian tour. He had earlier visited Brunei, the Philippines and Singapore. He led a 115-member delegation which included ministers and businessmen.

Mandela, who last visited Malaysia in 1990, had said in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday that South Africa continued to learn valuable lessons from Malaysia in such areas as fair distribution of wealth, successful economic management, implementation of growth incentives, upliftment of indigenous Africans and introduction of programmes to ensure harmony among the people.

He held discussions with Dr Mahathir on these and other issues of mutual concern.

He also took part in the second South Africa-Malaysia forum and the launch of the South Africa-Malaysia Business Council in Kuala Lumpur, besides witnessing the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Umno Youth and the ANC Youth League in Langkawi last night.

The MoU, which calls for closer co-operation between the two movements in education, culture, sports and the economy, was signed by Umno Youth head Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and treasurer Mokhzani Mahathir and ANC Youth League president Malusi Gigaba and secretary-general Pemmy Majodina.

Gigaba said Mandela and the South African delegation appreciated the warm hospitality and friendship offered by the Government and the Malaysian people.

"Everywhere we went, we were met with smiling faces from your very warm and generous people," he added.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived in Langkawi on Saturday, left later for Kuala Lumpur.

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