

07 MAR 1997

Mandela-Mahathir

MANDELA HOLD TALKS WITH MAHATHIR, FOCUS TO BE ON STRONGER TIES

KUALA LUMPUR, March 7 (Bernama) -- Visiting South African President Nelson Mandela today began bilateral talks with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Prime Minister's Department.

Their discussions would focus on the strengthening of the economic cooperation between the two countries, according to officials.

Total trade between Malaysia and South Africa amounted to RM883 million in 1995 with South African exports to Malaysia almost doubling to M388 million.

Mandela is also expected to discuss with the Prime Minister the proposed Indian Ocean Rim economic grouping which consists of 14 countries including Malaysia, the officials said.

The two leaders would then attend the Malaysia-South Africa delegation meeting before witnessing the signing of agreements between the private sector of both countries.

Mandela arrived here yesterday to begin a five-day visit to Malaysia, the final leg of his 10-day tour of four Asean nations. He had visited the Philippines, Brunei and Singapore.

The 78-year-old leader was accompanied by a 115-member delegation, including ministers, senior officials and businessmen.

This is Mandela's first visit to Malaysia since becoming the republic's head of state in 1994.

Mandela is later scheduled to visit the Proton car plant in Shah Alam and attend a briefing at the Economic Planning Unit.

He would also deliver a talk on "South Africa and Malaysia: A Joint Vision Towards the 21st Century" organised by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations at the Istana Hotel here. --BERNAMA

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