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Mozambique-Visit

MOZAMBIQUE PRESIDENT'S VISIT OPENS NEW FRONTIER

By: R.Ravichandran

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 (Bernama) -- The four-day visit by Mozambique President Joaquim Alberto Chissano beginning tomorrow is set to open new opportunities for bilateral ties and Malaysian investors in southern Africa.

Chissano, 58, a veteran of Mozambique's liberation struggle against the Portugese, will be the first president from the south east African country to visit Malaysia.

He will be accompanied by his wife, Marcelina Rafael, and a 34-member delegation which includes his foreign affairs and cooperation minister, industry, commerce and tourism vice-minister, agriculture and fisheries vice-minister and 17 leading businessmen, said Wisma Putra.

Chissano succeeded Samora Machel, the first Mozambique president who died in a plane crash in 1986. Mozambique gained independence from Portugal in 1975.

Malaysia had played a role in ensuring peace in the country by sending its officers to serve under the United Nations Operations in Mozambique (UNUMOZ) in 1992.

National chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCIM) vice-president Senator Datuk V.K.K. Teagarajan told Bernama that Malaysian investors should tap the resource-rich country especially in mining and energy.

"I think it has good potential for our investors. We should expand our economic ties more actively," he said.

Chissano will be hosted to a luncheon by the NCCIM on Thursday after meeting Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who actively pursues South-South cooperation.

The two countries are beginning to explore a more active relationship being members of the Non-Aligned Movement, Commonwealth and more recently, the newly-created Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC).

Trade between Kuala Lumpur and Maputo (capital of Mozambique) is small, totalling only RM1.5 million last year, namely in vegetable oils, chemicals and raw materials.

Mozambique can be another front for Malaysian investors who are actively involved in several other African countries like Angola, South Africa, Mali, Namibia, Ghana and Guinea either through joint ventures or foreign direct investment.

Mozambique's ports of Maputo, Nacala and Beira serve its neighbours such as Swaziland and land-locked Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia. Nacala is reputed to be the best deep water port on the African east coast.

Mozambique is also a member of the Southern African Development Community, Organisation of African Unity, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa.

The Mozambique government recently created four industrial tax-free zones in in the country which has large gas reserves, considerable coal and oil potential as well as minerals that include pegmatite and tantalite which are used in the electronics industry and special steels making.

There are also copper, marble, asbestos, limestone, gold, graphite and iron ore.

The country has two state-owned airlines, LAM (Linhas Aereas de Mocambique) which flies international routes and TTA (Empresa Nacional de

Transport e Trabalho Aereo) to cater for scheduled and chartered services.

Mozambique's annual growth rate has risen from 2.7 per cent in 1989 to 5 per cent in 1995 with per capita income of its 17 million population is US\$250 (RM625). Portuguese is its official language.

Its main trading partners are Portugal, Spain, United States, Japan and South Africa. -- BERNAMA

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