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Rafidah-S.Africa

NEW PACT TO BOOST MALAYSIA-S.AFRICA TRADE

KUALA LUMPUR, March 7 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and South Africa today signed two agreements, one on a new trade pact to facilitate the setting up of a joint trade committee to enhance two-way trade and the other on shipping and maritime matters.

The trade agreement was signed by International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and South Africa's Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry P. Mlambo-Ngcuka.

The agreement on Merchant Shipping and Related Maritime Matters was signed by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and South African Mineral and Energy Affairs Minister P.Maduna.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and visiting South African President Nelson Mandela witnessed the signing ceremony at the Prime Minister's Department.

On the trade pact, Rafidah said that apart from the joint trade committee, it would also grant each country the Most Favoured Nation treatment in matters relating to customs duties and foreign trade formalities.

She said the trade pact would also facilitate each other's participation in trade fairs and exhibitions which included exemptions from custom duties and other charges for samples intended for exhibitors and fairs.

"The main objective of the trade agreement is to expand and deepen trade, economic and industrial cooperation on a long-term basis," she said in a statement issued to reporters after the signing ceremony.

The agreement, Rafidah said, augured well for the private sector of both countries and it would also further stimulate the flow of trade, investments and individual business initiatives.

The minister said South Africa is Malaysia's largest trading partner in Africa. In 1996, total trade stood at RM1.36 billion, an increase of 14.3 per cent over 1995.

Malaysia's export to South Africa for 1996 was recorded at RM719 million. Major exports to the republic included palm oil, wood, natural rubber and latex, telecommunication and sound equipment, office machinery and data processing machines.

Imports from South Africa which amounted to RM643 million included gold, iron and steel bars, cereals, paper and paperboard and fertilisers, she said. -- BERNAMA

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