

06 MAR 1997

Mandela-visit

PRESIDENT MANDELA ARRIVES FOR FIVE-DAY VISIT

KUALA LUMPUR, March 6 (Bernama) -- South African President Nelson Mandela arrived here today to begin a five-day visit to Malaysia, the final leg of his 10-day tour of four Asean nations.

Mandela, 78, accompanied by his companion Graca Machel, was received at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He is 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.

The South African president made a trip to Malaysia in 1993, a year before the first free and non-racial elections in South Africa took place on April 27, 1994.

Mandela, who has been to the Philippines, Brunei and Singapore, was later given a ceremonial welcome at Parliament Square.

On hand to receive him was the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar. Also present was Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah.

Mandela then inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by 103 men and four officers from the first battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment (RAMD) led by Mej Hamdi Abdul Rahman.

The national anthem of the two countries were played by the RAMD's Armour Centre band.

The South African leader was later introduced to Cabinet ministers and foreign dignitaries.

Tonight, Mandela will attend a state banquet hosted by Tuanku Ja'afar at Istana Negara.

Tomorrow, he will hold talks with Dr Mahathir at the Prime Minister's Department. The two leaders will then witness the signing of bilateral agreements.

During his visit, Mandela will visit the Proton automobile plant in Shah Alam, the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department and the Petronas Twin Towers at the Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

He will deliver a talk at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations and attend the Second Malaysia-South Africa Business Forum.

Mandela will also make a trip to Langkawi before flying home on Monday.

Dr Mahathir and Mandela have forged close personal ties. The Prime Minister made an unofficial stop-over in South Africa in 1992 and his first official visit in August 1995.

Malaysia established diplomatic relations with South Africa in November 1993 after the dismantlement of apartheid and has been supportive of the national unity government of Mandela.

Total trade between Malaysia and South Africa amounted to RM883 million in 1995 with South African exports to Malaysia almost doubled to RM388 million. -- BERNAMA