

Djibouti offers to be gateway for M'sian goods

By SHAMSUL AKMAR

KUALA LUMPUR: Djibouti has offered to be the gateway for Malaysian goods into eastern Africa which has a market of 130 million people.

Djibouti President Hassan Ghouled Aptidon made the offer when he met Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Prime Minister's office yesterday.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting with the Djibouti delegation, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Malaysia would send the Transport and International Trade and Industry ministers to assess the potential in Djibouti.

Djibouti also invited Malaysia to set up a free trade zone for the eastern African market and Aptidon offered Malaysian businessmen incentives for investments in light

industries, banking, telecommunications, petroleum and banking.

Abdullah said Djibouti also sought Malaysian help to modernise its infrastructure, agriculture and industries as well as its port and airports.

Two agreements were signed — one on economic, scientific, technical and cultural co-operation and the other on promotion and protection of investment.

In the first agreement, the signatories were Abdullah and Djibouti Commerce and Industry Minister Mohamed Barkat Abdillahi.

For the second agreement, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz represented Malaysia, while Djibouti was again represented by Barkat.

Dr Mahathir and Aptidon witnessed the ceremony.