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Bilateral trade with Ethiopia rises 3-fold

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BILATERAL trade between Malaysia and Ethiopia which contributed only 5 per cent to Malaysia's total external trade, has increased three-fold since 1993.

Last year, total trade between Malaysia and Ethiopia amounted to RM24.63 million with the later enjoying a surplus of about RM3.5 million.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Mr Meles Zenawi said his country is seeking more Malaysian private sector involvement in his country.

"We are encouraging investment in line with our effort to develop our agro-culture sector," he told reporters after delivering a keynote address at a seminar on trade and investment opportunities in Ethiopia in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Zenawi also said that some sectors of the Ethiopian economy has been opened to private sector investment, such as telecommunications and hydro power generation which were previously restricted to government agencies.

"The response from the private sectors was very encouraging but we still have to be selective," he said.

Malaysia's main exports to Ethiopia are palm stearin and other industrial materials like monocarboxylic, fatty acids, liquified propane and butane, paper and paperboard which accounted for 84.9 per cent of Malaysia's exports to Ethiopia.

Other items consist of office and stationery supplies, magazines and instrument and apparatus for medical purposes.

On October 14 this year, Malaysia agreed to provide technical assistance and training to Ethiopia in the palm oil and rubber industries. Ethiopia is developing these two industries to help boost its economy.

"Malaysia can share with Ethiopia its expertise and in research and development," he said.

Zenawi arrived on Wednesday for a five-day official visit to promote trade and investment. The last visit to Malaysia by an Ethiopian leader was by His Majesty Haile Selassie in 1968.

At a reception on Thursday night, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad pledged to assist Ethiopia in its reconciliation efforts and share the country's experience in developing the Ethiopian economy.

Dr Mahathir had said that in the spirit of South-South cooperation, Malaysia will do its utmost to assist Ethiopia.

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