

03 AUG 1998

Abdullah-Djibouti

DJIBOUTI WANTS MALAYSIA TO USE IT AS GATEWAY TO EAST AFRICA

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 3 (Bernama) -- Djibouti has offered Malaysia to use the African country as a gateway to a huge east African market of some 130 million people, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

Briefing reporters after a bilateral delegation meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Djiboutian President Hassan Gouled Aptidon here, Abdullah said Djibouti saw this as another way to increase bilateral trade and investment.

"Malaysia will send a ministerial level delegation to the country to have a closer look on this and other trade and investment opportunities there," he said.

Abdullah said the ministers of transport as well as for international trade and industry would be going to Djibouti for the purpose as today's discussions involved mainly opportunities in the two sectors.

Djibouti, a former French colony of 22,000 sq km in area and with some 434,000 people, is located in the eastern region of the African continent known as the Horn of Africa. It shares common borders with Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

President Aptidon arrived here yesterday for a nine-day state visit to further enhance bilateral ties.

Abdullah said Aptidon expressed Djibouti's willingness to provide various incentives to Malaysian investors in the area of petroleum industry, telecommunications, banking and light industries.

Djibouti had asked Malaysia to help the country to set up a free trade zone to further develop its economy, he said.

Abdullah said Djibouti also wanted Malaysia's help to modernise and develop its various sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture, power generation, port and airport services.

Djibouti was also seeking Malaysian involvement in its economic development especially in ports.

"But the Prime Minister said that we are currently facing with economic problems and as such there could be difficulties to involve in a big way," he said.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir had offered economic-related training programmes to Djibouti especially in the field of management and port management.

He said at present, nine students from the republic were studying at the International Islamic University in Petaling Jaya near here.

Meanwhile, Malaysia and Djibouti signed two agreements on Promotion and Protection of Investment, and Agreement on Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation.

Malaysia was represented by Abdullah and International Trade and Industry Ministry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz while Djibouti by its Minister of Commerce and Industry Mohamed Barkat Abdillahi for both agreements.

-- BERNAMA

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