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PM satisfied with outcome of visit to Mozambique

Ahmad A. Talib in Maputo, Mozambique

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad ended his visit to Mozambique yesterday saying he was satisfied with the outcome of his discussions with government and private sector officials.

"New areas of co-operation have been identified for future collaboration," he said.

Dr Mahathir identified agricultural research and development, financial services and property development especially housing as areas which have big potential in Mozambique.

He said this at a joint Press conference with President Joaquim Alberto Chissano at the latter's office. Just before the conference, both leaders witnessed the signing of the economic, scientific, technical and cultural co-operation agreement.

Energy, Posts and Telecommunications Minister Datuk Leo Moggie signed for Malaysia while the Mozambican Foreign Minister Dr Leonardo Simao signed for his country. The agreements spell out broad areas of co-operation between the two countries.

Said Dr Mahathir: "We are also looking to source some of our requirements from Mozambique as this would help reduce the trade imbalance which is now in our favour. Other than three areas, we're studying whether it's viable to go into cashewnut production and marketing.

"I am satisfied with the outcome of my visit. It has helped to strengthen relations and I expect more interaction between us at the ministerial, official and private sector level. The visit has also contributed to closer rapport between our two countries," he added.

The Prime Minister was also given a rare honour when he addressed the Mozambican Cabinet and senior members of the civil service including the central bank. Asked on this, Dr Mahathir said:

"I was given the honour to share our experiences in many matters. The attack on our currency was one area which I was asked to explain at some detail. I also learnt a few things from them with regard to their currency situation which may be useful."

Chissano said he was also satisfied with Dr Mahathir's visit, saying that a lot was accomplished even though the visit was short. Dr Mahathir is the first Malaysian Prime Minister to have visited Mozambique.

He said that there was so much to learn from the Malaysian experience, particularly in equitable wealth distribution and in strengthening the economy. Mozambique, too, had to endure discrimination which had to be overcome if the people were to be free and develop.

"We now know that your economic problems are not brought by yourself but by external forces.

"However, your currency problems will not stop us from strengthening our relations for the future," he said.

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