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Mozambique all set for SAID 2000

Saiful Azhar Abdullah in Mozambique

ALONG one of the streets of Maputo, colourful canvas paintings hung like dry laundry.

On the pavement were the makonde sculptures and the macua and phsykelekedana traditional Mozambican arts and crafts.

Its peddlars were sitting under a tree engrossed in a game of draughts, killing another dull day.

The game ended abruptly the moment a tourist strolled by and stopped for a glimpse of the paintings. Tourists mean income.

Bringing the economy to its feet is one of the toughest tasks facing Joachim Alberto Chissano, the President of Mozambique.

His excitement over Mozambique hosting the Fourth Southern Africa International Dialogue 2000 is understandable. He is banking ideas from leaders at the dialogue to help build the Mozambican economy.

"I look forward to a vigorous and constructive dialogue," said Chissano in his message welcoming leaders attending the SAID 2000. Today's challenges are greater than ever, and we must develop concrete strategies with which to meet and overcome them.

"How we can best work together to harness science and technology to our development need, to plan for the future, to develop our human resources most appropriately and to intensify our mutual learning process are just some of the issues we will be looking at.

"When tackling natural disasters such as those suffered by my country earlier this year, or devastation caused by the HIV and AIDS pandemic and malaria, we must be able to benefit from the pooling of our brains, skills, experience and energy," added Chissano who would lead the dialogue sessions, reflecting his delight at having the benefit of getting outside views to help solve the difficult period facing his people.

Emerging from a courtesy call on Chissano, Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management chairman Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman spoke of how committed the Mozambican Government was towards making the session a fruitful gathering of thoughts for the participants.

SAID 2000 is the first major conference to be held at the Mozambican capital.

By Saturday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, instrumental in the innovation of the Smart Partnership philosophy at the inaugural Langkawi International Dialogue in 1995, will be in Maputo to join other leaders for a four-day dialogue.

Other African leaders who will be joining him and Chissano at the dialogue table are President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe, Prime Minister of Lesotho Bethuel Pakalitha Mosisili, President of Namibia Dr Sam Nujoma, President of Tanzania Benjamin William Mkapa, Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, Zambian President Frederick Chiluba, Prime Minister of Grenada Dr Keith Claudius Mitchell, Deputy President of South Africa J.G. Zuma and Vice-President of Malawi Justin Malewezi.

They will focus on the theme, "Smart Partnership 2000 - Global Trends in Emerging Economies."

On their agenda will be the progress of the Smart Partnership hubs which have been established by most of the participating nations.

Another topic of discussion will be the relevance of globalisation.

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