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PM opens business centre in Kampala today

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who arrives in Kampala, Uganda, today for the Global 2001 SAID/LID, a smart partnership international dialogue, will open the Malaysian Business Centre in the city.

The MBC was set up by Masscorp Trading Sdn Bhd (MTSB), a subsidiary of the Malaysian South-South Corporation Berhad (Masscorp Bhd) and a Malaysian, Sekaran Vellasamy, who has been residing and doing business in Uganda for the last 15 years.

Established earlier this year, MBC is a platform for greater awareness in Africa of Malaysian manufactured products and services, as well as for the effective promotion of business transactions between Malaysian companies and those in Uganda and the surrounding region.

Masscorp Bhd general manager Ng Su Fun told the New Straits Times that the MBC was established after MTSB saw the business potential in Uganda through its participation in a business mission in October last year.

"We took up the challenge to look for a like-minded partner to establish a business presence in Uganda with a vision to expand its operations into the region in the future," she said.

The Malaysian Business Centre (U) Ltd in Uganda was incorporated in February and commenced operation on March 1.

Ng said it was Malaysia South-South Association (Massa) executive committee member Datuk J Jegathesan, the senior adviser on investment and technology to Uganda, who mooted the idea.

She said the MBC would assist Malaysian manufacturers to export and make their products known to Uganda's 20 million population and, later, the Eastern Africa region's population of 125 million.

Since MBC became operational, Ng said, eight containers of an assortment of Malaysian products such as pharmaceuticals, household items and various food items were sent which were well received.

"While selling the products we are also looking into potential investments," she added.

Ng said the MBC has an effective network of numerous major supermarket chains in town.

The MBC, whose managing director is Sekaran and executive director Elaine Kiew, has also secured contracts to supply disposable pharmaceutical products to major importers in Uganda. In addition, it has identified strategic partners in Rwanda, Republic of Congo and Tanzania.

MTSB's primary role is to complement Massa, Masscorp Bhd and the Malaysian Government through the Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade), in representing Malaysian manufacturers and producers.

MTSB was formed in 1997 as one of the four general trading corporations endorsed by the Malaysian Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

Masscorp Berhad, a consortium of 85 Malaysian shareholders most of whom are corporate leaders, was formed in tandem with Massa, following the successful 1991 trade mission to Latin America by Dr Mahathir.

A recent restructuring exercise resulted in Masscorp Bhd divesting 15 per cent of its shareholding to Tee Hock Seng Holdings Sdn Bhd, an investment holding company.

MTSB's managing director, Tan Sri Tee Hock Seng, who is also a director of Massa and Masscorp Bhd and is serving as country director for Cambodia,

Laos and Micronesia, will be present at the opening of the MBC with MTSB director Tan Sri Mustapha Kamal Abu Bakar.

MTSB has offices in Australia, India and Uganda. Its aim to look for investment opportunities in developing countries.

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