

01 OCT 2002

South Africa-SNNi/(With Pix)

SNNi NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED, SAYS SOUTH AFRICAN ENVOY

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 1 (Bernama) -- The Smart News Network International (SNNi) initiative should be further strengthened as the present traditional media coverage on Malaysia and the African region are not "very friendly."

South African High Commissioner to Malaysia Dr Abraham Sokhaya Nkomo said African countries could not depend on conventional news channels which were not independent in performing their duties.

"We've to look on how a good network can bring an independent objective coverage of news event in Africa as we cannot depend on channels that are conventional and traditional that do not have a very friendly view on the development in our country," he told Bernama after visiting the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) here today.

SNNi was jointly launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and President Joachim Chissano of Mozambique in Kampala, Uganda, on Aug 20 last year.

The initial participating members of SNNi are Daily News of Botswana, BERNAMA, The New Straits Times and Utusan Malaysia of Malaysia, Mozambique News Agency, Namibia Today of Namibia, Buanews of South Africa, New Vision News Agency and The Herald of Zimbabwe.

Nkomo said no efforts should be spared by participating countries in strengthening the SNNi to make it a more credible source of news for the people in the two continents.

"No effort will be spared in developing a news network for the people in the south," he said.

On the Malaysia-South Africa bilateral relations, he said, business communities of both countries should strive to increase trade between the two nations as well as create more joint ventures.

Nkomo said a project was underway to lay telecommunication cables to connect Malaysia, Mauritius and South Africa in efforts to bring the people from the three countries closer.

He said South Africa would also like to see more Malaysians visiting the country to utilise its vast education centres which are world-acclaimed in several fields, particularly engineering, medical and English.

At present, Nkomo said more than 150 South African students were studying in various institutions of higher learning in Malaysia but that number was not well reciprocated by Malaysians.

"It should be a two-way street," he said, adding that, both countries were studying the possibilities of expanding and strengthening their existing strong cooperation in education.

-- BERNAMA

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