

PM on the Namibia way to global markets

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INVESTING in Namibia could give Malaysian companies duty- and quota-free access to the United States, and preferential entry to the European market, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Namibia, a member of the 14-nation South African Customs Union, which at 200 years is the world's oldest and has a combined population of 200 million, could also be Malaysia's gateway into the southern African region, he said.

Similarly, trading with Malaysia could give Namibian businesses an avenue to enter the Asean market, he told businessmen at the Malaysian-Namibian Business Forum here yesterday.

Malaysia's trade with its Asean neighbours was worth US\$75.3 billion (RM171.6 billion) last year.

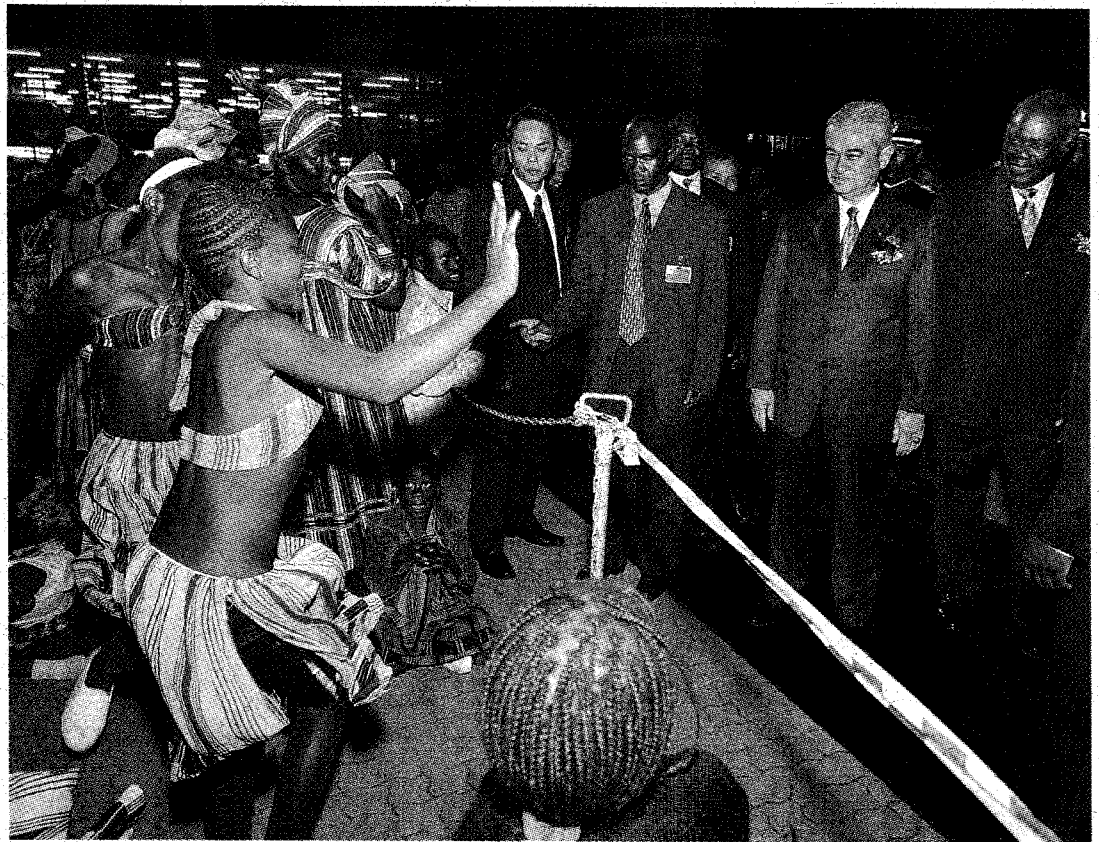
Namibia enjoys preferential treatment from the European Union under the Cotonou agreement. A trade agreement between the South African Customs Union and the European Union is also in the pipeline.

Abdullah's luncheon address followed a courtesy call on Namibian President Hifikepunye Pohamba here.

"We are aware that Namibia is very active on the trade liberalisation front," he said.

The country also recently concluded a trade agreement with Angola, and is negotiating one with China.

"Such initiatives create market space and opportunities, especial-



Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, accompanied by Namibian President Hifikepunye Pohamba (right), watch as the Namibian tribal troupe perform the traditional Bushman Dance to welcome him at the Hosea Kutako International Airport on Thursday. — Bernama picture

ly pertinent for countries like Malaysia and Namibia, which have relatively small domestic markets of their own," Abdullah said.

Namibia's trade with Malaysia, mostly in textiles, apparel and precious stones, totalled US\$29 million in 2006, less than 0.01 per cent of Malaysia's global trade.

Abdullah urged businessmen of both countries to take advantage of their respective regional economic groupings.

"We need to look at each other

not in terms of single markets but in the context of the access that each country has to the larger regional markets," he said.

Earlier, the prime minister highlighted several sectors that had the potential for expansion, from investment in infrastructure development to mining, education and tourism.

"The role of our governments is to establish a business-friendly environment to enable our businessmen to undertake profitable business ventures among them-

selves," he said prior to a closed-door meeting with Pohamba.

Still, it was up to the private sector to initiate ventures after the government laid the groundwork, he added.

Abdullah arrived in Windhoek on Thursday evening for a three-day visit to Namibia. This is the final leg of his African tour, which began on April 15 with Sudan.

"This series of visits is a reflection of Malaysia's keenness to do business with and increase its profile in Africa," he said.