

**Najib's Visit To South Africa Proves Malaysia's Foreign Policies Consistent**  
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**From Ahmad Kamil Tahir**

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's working visit to South Africa beginning Saturday is a signal to South African and Malaysian investors to take advantage of the close ties between the two countries by exploring business opportunities.

The Malaysian High Commissioner to South Africa, Kennedy Jawan said although Najib's visit here would be short, it was still a sign of the close relations between both countries and Malaysia' consistent foreign policy of supporting South Africa and the struggles of its black people for their rights.

He said Najib who would be here on the invitation of South African President Jacob Zuma, would be among 46 heads of state to gather in Bloemfontein, about a five-hour drive from here, to witness the historic moment of the centenary celebration of the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC).

"Malaysia's position on the issue of Apartheid had been very clear and assertive. From the first prime minister (Tunku Abdul Rahman) until the present, Malaysia has championed the cause of the South African blacks in their struggle against the evil that is enshrined in the programmes of Apartheid," he told Malaysian reporters covering Najib's visit.

Jawan said over the years since both countries established diplomatic ties in 1993, South Africa had become an important trading and investment partner for Malaysia. Trade between Malaysia and South Africa has increased significantly.

He said Malaysia and South Africa had maintained close ties, with strong government-to-government and people-to-people links.

"The close relationship has steadily expanded over the years into various areas of cooperation, which cover bilateral trade, promotion and protection of investments, avoidance of double taxation and exploration and exploitation of petroleum."

He said there was increasing exchange of high level visits, which further demonstrated the importance of South Africa to Malaysia.

These visits contribute towards the strengthening of friendly relations and the development of closer bilateral cooperation in all areas, including trade and investment.

Jawan said globally, South Africa ranked as Malaysia's 25th largest trading partner. Within African countries, South Africa is Malaysia's largest trading partner and the 2nd largest export destination and largest source of imports.

He said Malaysia's total trade with South Africa last year amounted to RM5.2 billion, with

exports accounting for RM2.79 billion and imports, RM2.57 billion, adding that over the years, Malaysia's investments in South Africa had been growing and generated mutual benefits for both countries.

For example, he said, Mitrajaya Holdings Bhd was one of the leading property investors in Gauteng, South Africa for its Blue Valley Golf & Country Estate.

Jawan said some Malaysian companies which invested in South Africa had expanded their operations in the country.

For example, in oil and gas, Petronas subsidiary Engen Petroleum Ltd owns a refinery in Durban and operates approximately 1,600 service stations across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Jawan said in the context of the continued expansion of Malaysia-South Africa bilateral trade, there was considerable scope for increasing two-way trade between both countries.

"Malaysia is in a position to supply a wide range of high-quality and competitively-priced products and services to meet the requirements of South African," he added.

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