

## NEWS

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# Malaysia confident South African struggle will pay off

By Manan Osman

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Malaysia is confident that multi-party negotiations in South Africa will lead to the establishment of a multi-party government committed to the well-being of the people.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Malaysia congratulated the African National Congress (ANC) for the central role played in this development.

"It has been a long hard struggle involving enormous sacrifice and we rejoice with you that at last the end is in sight," Abdullah said.

He was opening a nine-week training course in diplomacy for 20 ANC officials at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) here today.

The course is being held under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCPP) to enhance diplomatic skills and experience.

Abdullah said Malaysia would continue efforts to bring about order in South Africa besides assisting in its reconstruction and development.

He said the effort had already started with the provision of assistance for the construction of houses for future ANC civil servants in Cape Town and Pretoria.

The project, which has cost the Malaysian Government about US\$10 million (RM26 million) to date, is almost completed and is expected to be ready later this month or early next month, he said.

Malaysia also assisted in the establishment of the ANC representative office here, providing for its annual operating expenses and



Abdullah (centre) shares a joke with ANC chief representative in Kuala Lumpur Ismail Coovadia (left) and IDFR director-general Datuk A.S. Talalla after the opening ceremony.

other infrastructural facilities.

Abdullah said Malaysia would continue to be proactive and supportive of a multi-racial and non-apartheid South Africa in all forums at international, regional and bilateral levels.

"At various international forums, Malaysia in the past 35 years has taken a very strong position against apartheid.

"We were instrumental in the expulsion of the South African apartheid government from the Commonwealth in 1960.

"We were also in the forefront rallying support for economic sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa. In the United Nations, Malaysia has been active in the special committee against apartheid," he said.

Malaysia had also consistently supported the anti-

apartheid group in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

He said the bond of friendship between the Malaysian and South African people was a manifestation of the close relationship between the leaders of both countries.

Abdullah also said that economic relations between the two countries was vast especially with Africa's favourable geographical location which provided her with the potential to play an important role in the region in the immediate future.

He said that both countries should forge meaningful bilateral economic relations.

Abdullah said that in the post Cold War era, the world was undergoing frenzied and rapid changes economically and the South would only be able to uphold its interest if it was strong and cohesive.

In that context, economic co-operation in the area of development should be explored further and cooperation in trade and investment should be pursued to ensure mutual strength.

Abdullah said six participants from Bosnia-Herzegovina had been expected to attend the course but the tragic condition in their country had prevented them from coming here.

Speaking to reporters later, Abdullah said Malaysian businessmen should start exploring investment opportunities in South Africa besides establishing contacts with local businessmen given the fact that economic sanctions against the country would be lifted soon.

He said Malaysia would also respond positively if the ANC needed assistance in holding elections in South Africa.