

SA, Iran sign minerals pact

PRETORIA: South Africa and Iran have signed a number of pacts that will see them cooperate in various fields, among them trade and mineral processing.



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The pacts were signed during Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa's three-day working visit to Iran, where he led a high level government and trade delegation to consolidate bilateral political, economic and trade relations.

The Deputy Minister's visit was preceded by a number of bilateral meetings at a ministerial level, focusing on collaborating in energy, agriculture, tourism, trade and water resource management.

The visit has been labelled a success as a MoU was signed between Mintek (South Africa), IMIDRO and Iran IMIDRO, and Iran Mineral Processing Research Centre (IMPRC). The MoU will focus on mineral processing.

MoUs were signed between the Financial Intelligence Centre of South Africa and Financial Intelligence Unit of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Information Exchange Concerning Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing, and between the Financial Services Board of South Africa and Securities and Exchange Organisation of Iran in Relation to Assistance and Mutual Co-operation in the Capital Markets Sector.

In a joint declaration, the two sides said they have agreed on the final draft text of the MoU on agricultural cooperation. This

MoU is considered ready for final endorsement by the parties.

The parties further agreed to operationalise the Technical Working Group on Agriculture and Fisheries in order to put the MoU into action.

The parties also agreed that the Agriculture Technical Working Group has to work on the draft agreement in the field of veterinary and animal health; the draft agreement in the field of plant quarantine and plant health, and the draft agreement on aquaculture and enforcement fisheries management models.

Cooperation in oil and gas

South Africa and Iran also agreed to further engage on a mechanism to facilitate cooperation in oil and gas.

Iran was South Africa's largest supplier of crude oil. However, South Africa was obliged to halt its imports of Iranian oil as of June 2012 as a result of sanctions.

Deputy President Ramaphosa's visit to Iran followed the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Programme of Action between Iran and the so-called P5+1 countries of the UN Security Council earlier this year.

The five permanent members are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as Germany.

The signing of the Joint Comprehensive Programme of Action is expected to result in the withdrawal of sanctions imposed on Iran.

During his visit, Deputy President Ramaphosa also presided over the launch of the SA-Iran Business Council.

The council noted the success of companies doing business in Iran and the enormous capacity developed by the Iranians in areas such as petrochemicals, oil and gas, agriculture and on developing sources of energy such as wind and gas.

While in Iran, Deputy President Ramaphosa had an opportunity to pay courtesy visits to President Hassan Rouhani and Speaker of Parliament Ali Larijani.

"The Deputy President expressed South Africa's gratitude to the Iranian government for the stances it has taken on various regional cooperation issues and ongoing support for the transformation of the United Nations Security Council," said the Presidency.

The Deputy President was supported by Water and Sanitation Minister Nomvula Mokonyane; the Deputy Ministers of International Relations and Cooperation Nomaindia Mfeketo, Mineral Resources Godfrey Oliphant, Finance Mcebisi Jonas, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Bheki Cele and Tourism Tokozile Xasa and other senior government officials.

Representatives of state-owned companies such as Eskom, Mintek, the Council for Geoscience, Financial Intelligence Centre and South African Revenue Service and over 80 business leaders were part of the visit.