South African Business Delegation concludes successful visit to Sri Lanka

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The high-level Business Delegation of the African National Congress-Progressive Business Forum (ANC-PBF) led by Prof. Hlengiwe Mkhize, Deputy Minister of Economic Development of South Africa visited Sri Lanka from 5th – 9th September 2012. The 24-member delegation included Renier Schoeman, Co-convener of the ANC-PBF and leading South African businessmen of mining, construction, agriculture, IT and retail sectors. The Progressive Business Forum is the Business wing of the ANC and has a membership of over 6000 companies.
The ANC-PBF had co-hosted ‘Sri Lanka – South Africa Business Forum’ with the Sri Lanka-Africa & Middle East Business Council of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce on 6th September at the Hotel Taj Samudra. The Deputy Ministers of the Economic Development of both countries addressed the Business Forum which was followed by several business to business (B2B) meetings. Deputy Minister Lakshman Yapa Abeywardena in his address invited the South African Business delegation to choose Sri Lanka as their next destination for investment and tourism. The Deputy Minister Mkhize highlighted that the two countries are well positioned after prolonged domestic conflicts to expand economic relations and achieve inclusive growth. An MOU was signed between the Sri Lanka-Africa & Middle East Business Council of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce to further strengthen trade and economic opportunities between Sri Lanka and South Africa. The programme of the South African Business Delegation also included visits to the Parliament, FACETS exhibition, BOI, Sri Lankan tea, rubber, garment and porcelain industries, IT Park, Nano Park and also Jaffna peninsula. They also called on the Minister of External Affairs Prof. G.L. Peiris at the Ministry of External Affairs. At the Parliament, the Deputy Minister Mkhize and her delegation had an opportunity to interact with the President of the Sri Lanka-South Africa Parliamentary Friendship Association, Chief Government Whip of Parliament and Minister of Water Supply & Drainage, Dinesh Gunawardana and other members of the Friendship Association. Minister Gunawardena recalled the long standing friendly relations between Sri Lanka and South Africa, while Deputy Minister Mkhize highlighted the importance of having South-South Cooperation between the two parliaments and its’ parliamentarians. Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources Management and the Leader of the House of Parliament Nimal Siripala de Silva explained to the visitors on the Government’s recent decision to enhance relations with countries in the African continent and the establishment of formal Diplomatic Relations with fifteen (15) African countries.At the Ministry of External Affairs, Prof. G. L. Peiris, recalling his strong attachment to an array of leaders and intellectuals from South Africa in his various capacities in the past, indicated that the current visit of the Business Delegation is part of a series of interactions between the two countries and that it fills an important lacuna. He also highlighted that the inclusivity in development programmes has led to uplifting of living standards of people in the conflict affected areas and invited the delegation to witness firsthand the progress made during their visit to Jaffna. Deputy Minister Mkhize mentioned that ANC had widespread support from all over the world in its economic development and is willing to share its experience and expertise with Sri Lanka. She also indicated that water, energy, infrastructure and mining are priority areas of development in South Africa and that there is potential for cooperation. At the BOI, the delegation was able to familiarize with investment opportunities, incentives and procedures in Sri Lanka. South Africa is Sri Lanka’s leading trade partner in Sub-Saharan Africa and the third most competitive economy in the $ 13.7 trillion BRICS grouping. South African Property Owners’ Association (SAPOA), the biggest South African property owner only second to the Government of South Africa, would be investing USD 122mn initially in Sri Lanka in February/March 2013.In Jaffna, the delegation visited Atchuveli Industrial Park, Kankasanthurai Harbour, Navatkuli Palmyrah Research Centre and the Public Library. Deputy Minister Mkhize and her delegation witnessed current situation in the region prevailing after defeat of 30 years of terrorism. They were very impressed with development work carried out by the Government and have expressed their keen interest in investing there. The Deputy Minister Mkhize met Minister of Traditional Industries and Small Enterprise Development Douglas Devananda and also visited the Maritime Campus, “Colombo International Nautical & Engineering College” (CINEC). 13th September 2012 Source - http://www.mea.gov.lk/index.php/media/3620-south-african-business-delegation-concludes-successful-visit-to-sri-lanka