

Iran's president Ahmadinejad visits Zimbabwe

Written by Chengetai Zvauya, Sapa
Friday, 23 April 2010 06:44 -



President Robert Mugabe has welcomed Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Zimbabwe, a meeting of two leaders united in fierce opposition to the West. Mugabe met Ahmadinejad at the Harare airport Thursday afternoon.

The Zimbabwe Iran Joint Commission had said ahead of Ahmadinejad's state visit that the two nations were committed to "the promotion of peace and stability in their respective regions" and welcomed Iran's proposals to host an international nuclear disarmament conference.

Iran has been under harsh criticism from Western nations for pressing ahead with uranium enrichment programs it says are to produce nuclear energy amid fears the militant Islamic state could develop nuclear weapons. Iran is the biggest exhibitor at a trade exposition Ahmadinejad is scheduled to open in the second city of Bulawayo on Friday. Ahmadinejad is the first leader from outside the African continent to open the exposition since independence from British colonial era rule in 1980.

In Zimbabwe's ailing economy - along with white-owned and foreign companies being forced under a new law to hand over 51 percent control to black Zimbabweans - many traditional Western exhibitors and local industries have stayed away from the annual trade fair, once a showcase of regional goods and products.

Ahmadinejad is scheduled to visit an Iranian-funded textile firm in Harare later Thursday and a vehicle assembly plant. Mugabe will host a state dinner for the Iranian leader in the evening. The communique by the joint commission which met Wednesday said in agricultural cooperation Iran proposed to assemble its models of tractors in Zimbabwe. The commission also agreed to set up a joint investment company to help develop industry, energy, mining, water management and social and financial services. Apart from a grant of \$2 million to health services, no other amounts of funding were mentioned.

Iran's president Ahmadinejad visits Zimbabwe

Written by Chengetai Zvauya, Sapa
Friday, 23 April 2010 06:44 -

Zimbabwe's economy went into free fall after disruptions caused by the often violent seizures of thousands of white-owned farms that began in 2000. After world record inflation, a yearlong coalition between Mugabe and the former opposition leader Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai abandoned the local currency, adopting hard currencies - mostly the U.S. dollar - for all purchases and transactions. Food imports ended acute shortages of basic goods but many local industries closed down or ran at a fraction of their capacity. Mugabe insists Western sanctions caused the economic collapse. Western leaders say Mugabe's policies, including his trampling of democracy, brought ruin.

The daily Herald newspaper, a mouthpiece of Mugabe's ZANU-PF party, said Ahmadinejad's visit came after the West had declared Iran "an axis of evil" and Zimbabwe a pariah state. It accused the West of wanting to bully both nations using "the might of its weapons of mass destruction." "The West's neocolonial agenda should only make us stronger," The Herald said in an editorial. Tsvangirai did not attend Thursday's welcome ceremony for Ahmadinejad.