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Mahathir-Thailand

MALAYSIA, THAILAND AGREE FOR PROMOTION OF TRIANGLE CONCEPT

from Syed Jamil Jaafar

⁹³
BANGKOK, Aug 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister ² ~~Datuk~~ ^{Mr} ~~Seri~~ ^{Chew} ~~Dr~~ ^{Son} Mahathir Mohamad and his Thai counterpart Chuan Leekpai have agreed that the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle concept be pursued vigorously to become a model of cooperation among neighbouring countries.

The two Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction with the efforts of the Growth Triangle Committee which met for the first time in Langkawi recently towards implementing the concept.

The promotion of the growth triangle concept was one of the key topics discussed by the two leaders in their four-eye talks at the government house here today.

The talks were held soon after an official welcoming ceremony was accorded to the Malaysian Prime Minister who arrived here this morning for a four-day official visit.

The private discussion was followed by a plenary session attended by the official delegations of the two countries led by their respective Prime Ministers.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told reporters other issues raised included the common border demarcation exercise, cooperation in science and technology, education and transportation, the East Asia Economic Caucus, the Cambodian situation and the Bosnia-Herzegovina problem.

He said the two Prime Ministers were happy with the close relations between the two countries. -- more

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Abdullah said the two leaders noted that there were some problems in border demarcation but these were being resolved at official level.

Both leaders agreed that cooperation between the two countries must be extended to cover new areas, especially in the private sector.

Dr Mahathir raised the possibility of Thai workers in Malaysia being issued certificate of identity so that their employment could be regularised and for longer periods as some of them were involved in long-term projects.

On the question of fishing rights, the two leaders agreed that discussions should continue towards finding solutions.

Thai boats have often been caught encroaching into Malaysian waters and this has become a contentious problem in their bilateral relations. -- more

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Thailand, on the other hand, has expressed interest in going into fishing joint ventures with Malaysia.

Other bilateral matters discussed included increasing flight frequency to promote tourism and cooperation in the automotive component industry.

Dr Mahathir also explained to Chuan that Malaysia's intention to buy MiG and Hornet fighter aircraft from Russia and the United States respectively did not mean that it was engaged in an arms race.

He told the Thai leader that Malaysia was merely replacing old aircraft with newer ones as its economy was doing quite well and the country now could afford to improve its armed forces.

Dr Mahathir, who recently visited China, also told Chuan that China's upgrading of its armed forces was also part of the process of replacement now that the country could afford it. -- more

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Dr Mahathir expressed the view that China's move in this respect should not give rise to undue concern.

When Singapore acquired sophisticated aircraft, Malaysia likewise did not raise a protest.

The two leaders also took note of developments regarding the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) which is to be taken up and moved towards realisation by Economic Ministers of Asean.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir was happy that Thailand shared Malaysia's view on the Bosnia situation.

"This showed the Bosnia problem was not one which only arouses the concern of Islamic countries like Malaysia," he added. -- more

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The two Prime Ministers also discussed the position of Myanmar and agreed that efforts be continued to foster relations with that country.

They noted that Myanmar was now more sensitive to international criticisms.

Dr Mahathir had a busy schedule on the first day of his visit today.

This afternoon, he attended a briefing on Thailand's economic development at the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB).

Following that, he had an audience with King Bhumibol at Chitralada Villa.

This evening, he was entertained to an official dinner by Chuan at Government House.

Meanwhile, this city of six million people has been gaily decorated with Malaysian flags and hoardings to welcome the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir's dynamism in developing Malaysia has drawn the admiration of many Thais, as evident when he was given an enthusiastic applause by hundreds of people when he arrived at the NESDB. -- Bernama

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