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Abdullah

PROTON SAGA MAY BE ASSEMBLED IN THE PHILIPPINES

(P)

From Azman Ujang 94

MANILA, Feb 4 (Bernama) -- The Proton Saga may be assembled in the Philippines if feasible, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

The matter was raised at the bilateral talks between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Philippine President Fidel Ramos here yesterday, he told Malaysian reporters here.

Along with the proposal, Malaysia was also keen to manufacture automotive component parts in the Philippines, he said.

The setting up of these industries was not merely to expand the market of the national car but also to benefit the Philippines by way of acquiring know-how on car assembly and parts manufacturing.

"Malaysia began acquiring the know-how in car manufacture by assembling cars and we want the Philippines to get the same experience to enable them to go into car manufacturing in future," he said.

Abdullah also said that new air and shipping services were being explored to expedite the take-off of the Philippines' proposal for the setting up of the East Asean Growth Area (EAGA) comprising southern Philippines, East Malaysia, Sulawesi in Indonesia and Brunei. -- more

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"This may even include the setting up of a new airline to serve the area because one of the constraints of developing it is air and sea links that will encourage greater flow of people and goods," he said.

Briefing reporters on today's meeting between Dr Mahathir and leaders of the Philippine Senate and Congress, Abdullah said Malaysian students might be sent to study in universities in the Philippines under a programme to be worked out between the two countries.

Malaysia was keen to enhance cooperation with the Philippines in the field of education as well and this would also include the Philippines sending lecturers to teach in Malaysia.

The programme would also mean that Malaysia would be able to take in students from the Philippines.

But the question of standardisation in terms of education and learning as well as recognition of degrees from each other's universities would have to be worked out, he said. -- more

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To begin with, a cooperation programme would be established between Malaysia's International Islamic University and the Mindanao State University in Southern Philippines for the purpose.

Dr Mahathir also suggested to the Senators and Congressmen for the Philippines to avail itself of the Bilateral Payment Arrangement (BPA) as a mechanism to generate more trade with other countries of the South.

Although BPA is a scheme under the Group of 15 (G-15) developing countries of the South and the Philippines is not a G-15 member, Malaysia as a member would help the Philippines to link up to the BPA, he said.

"The Senators and Congressmen are very grateful for the chance to hold a dialogue with the Prime Minister. They include chairmen of various Senate committees as well as representatives of Filipino Muslims," he added.

Abdullah said future prospects for Kuala Lumpur-Manila relations appeared most exciting as both sides were re-discovering each other and anxious to forge closer ties in all fields, especially trade and investment.

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The more visits made by people at all levels in both countries, the more areas of cooperation could be explored.

"Our relations are bound to be even better in the future."

"Both sides will not allow political differences to affect their ties as in the past," he added. -- Bernama

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