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Newspaper-visit

NEW LEVEL OF KL-MANILA RELATIONS BENEFITS REGION, SAYS DAILY

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SINGAPORE, Feb 7 (Bernama) -- The new era of relations between Malaysia and the Philippines following the recent visit to Manila of Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will benefit the region, according to a Singapore daily. *oversea - mps*

Dr Mahathir's visit and the warm welcome accorded by the Filipinos were an indication that the two countries are looking forward and want the level of relations to be further enhanced, the Berita Harian said in its editorial.

"This is a positive attitude because it will not only benefit both countries but also the region," it said.

The paper said the new spirit demonstrated by Dr Mahathir and President Fidel Ramos took place at a time when the region was experiencing rapid economic growth.

The greater emphasis towards economic cooperation given by Dr Mahathir and his delegation during the visit to the Philippines was apt, it said. --

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According to the newspaper, a new era had dawned following the visit of Ramos to Malaysia last year but it had become more significant with the reciprocal visit of Dr Mahathir as he is the first Malaysian prime minister to make an official visit to the Philippines.

It said Malaysia and the Philippines should not allow the latter's claim to Sabah to affect their relations but on the other hand look for common ground.

The economy offered much common ground as both countries could cooperate and the benefits could be shared by the peoples of both, it said.

With strong economic links and greater spirit of cooperation, the Sabah claim could be resolved more quickly and in a manner acceptable by both sides, it said.

"The problem of territorial claims is not something unique faced only by Malaysia and the Philippines as a similar problem was faced by Singapore and Malaysia and Indonesia and Malaysia, to quote examples," said the paper. In fact it is regarded "a common problem" among neighbouring countries.

"It is hoped that Asean countries facing the problem can produce an 'Asean formula' drawn from the spirit of Asean consensus that could serve as an example to other countries facing the same problem," the daily said.

Malaysia and the Philippines could be the pioneers in looking for a formula regarding the Philippine claim to Sabah, it said. -- Bernama

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