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Argentina-Agreement

ARGENTINA, MALAYSIA TO SEE AN INCREASE IN BILATERAL ACTIVITIES

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 23 (Bernama) -- Argentina and Malaysia are looking forward to an increase in bilateral activities covering all areas including the trade, economic, cultural and social fields following the visit of President Carlos Menem to the country.

"Both leaders have agreed that bilateral relations between Malaysia and Argentina are very well established and that there should be growth in air transportation for passengers as well as cargo for purposes of providing opportunities for tourists to travel between the two countries," said Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He was briefing reporters on the discussions between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the visiting Argentinian leader at his office here today.

Abdullah said Menem gave his assurance that Argentina would consider Malaysia's request for an increase in air frequency for Malaysia Airlines (MAS) to Argentina.

At same time, he said, the two leaders also discussed the improvement of sea transportation through the use of bigger ships to enable more goods to be transported and to reduce the cost of transportation in view of the distance between the two countries.

At the meeting, he said, they also agreed that both countries would act as a focal point for the distribution of goods from the respective countries to be exported or delivered to other countries in the respective continents.

Abdullah said Malaysia would be having close consultations with Argentinian groups on how to establish these distribution points as both countries wanted the centres to be established as soon as possible so that trade would be further intensified between the two countries.

"We have also agreed to continue consultations on subjects regarding the organisation of the United Nations and the restructuring of the Security Council as well as the coming World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting," he said.

He said the two leaders also emphasised the importance of the G15 as a group to serve as a catalyst to intensify South-South cooperation because it was important for such cooperation to succeed as countries in the South must also develop their own market.

According to Abdullah, Dr Mahathir particularly mentioned the need to pursue a policy of what he called "prosper thy neighbour or to help each other to prosper."

After the meeting, Menem and Dr Mahathir witnessed the signing of various agreements which Abdullah described as a reflection of the greater activities that would take place following the visit of the Argentinian president.

The first to be signed was an air services agreement which was endorsed by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and Argentinian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Dr Guido Jose Mario Di Tella.

Dr Di Tella also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation on tourism between Argentina and Malaysia which was represented by Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik.

Another MoU on mutual cooperation on trade promotion was signed by Malaysia External Trade Development Cooperation (Matrade) chief executive Samsuddin Marsop and Marcello Avogado of Foundation Export A.R. Argentina

(Exportar).

A joint-venture agreement on the formation of IMPSA (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd was signed by IMPSA (Asia) Sdn Bhd managing director Enrique M Pascamona, Hicom Holdings Bhd chairman Tan Sri Yahaya Ahmad, Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB) group chief executive Datuk Mohamed Hilmey Mohamed Taib, Kumpulan Pinang Holddings Bhd chairman Datuk Ahmad Fuat Mat Ali and Emir Equity Sdn Bhd chairman Datuk Mohamed Izat Emir.

An MoU between IMPSA (M) Sdn Bhd and Ekran Bhd was also signed for the supply of high tech equipment manufactured in Malaysia for the Bakun hydroelectric project. Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing signed the MoU on behalf of Ekran while Izat represented IMPSA (M) Sdn Bhd.

Abdullah added that during discussions on Asean-Mercusor relations, both leaders emphasised the importance of establishing relations between the two parties. Mercusor, the Southern Common Market, groups Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay.

"I informed the meeting that Asean Foreign Ministers have already discussed this and we are now looking on how to further develop relations," he added.

Likewise, he added, Malaysia had been informed that Mercusor would also be discussing its relations with Asean at a meeting to be held this year in Brazil.

Referring to trade, Abdullah said Argentina was an important trading partner for Malaysia. Argentina is the third largest in Latin America and provides entry into Latin America for MAS.

"It is important for some reasons... so is Brazil which is a very large trading partner for us and we cannot overlook that part.

"But as far as we are concerned, since Dr Mahathir's visit to Latin America in 1991, we are certainly now regarding this region as important as we want to intensify relations and to have more cooperation covering various areas like economic, technical, trade and investment fields," he said. -- BERNAMA

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