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Alatas-Bridge

BRIDGE LINKING MALAYSIA-INDONESIA BEING DISCUSSED

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 7 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Indonesia today discussed the possibility of building a bridge to link Peninsular Malaysia and North Sumatra, Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said.

Briefing reporters on the meeting between President Suharto and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad earlier, Alatas said the two leaders agreed that the proposed bridge is "a good idea" and it would be discussed further.

"For such a project, it is primarily the private sector that ought to come up with the capital and the two governments ought to further discuss this possibility," he said.

He said the proposed bridge would enhance land communication between the two countries.

The plan would fit in with Indonesia's latest tourism policy to allow tourists from neighbouring countries to bring their own cars to visit Indonesia.

Suharto's two-day working visit to Malaysia ends today.

Alatas said Indonesia is also planning to build bridges to link Sumatra and Java, Java and Bali, and between its other islands.

He said Dr Mahathir expressed Malaysia's keenness to expand its investments in Indonesia.

Suharto welcomed Malaysia's intention but hoped that special attention would be paid to the eastern part of Indonesia, an area which the Indonesian government is trying to promote to investors, he said.

"We will continue to need investment projects that are labour-intensive as a preference," Alatas added.

On energy cooperation, he said both countries would continue consultations regarding the laying of underwater power transmission cables to supply electricity from the Bakun hydroelectric dam in Sarawak to Peninsular Malaysia which will pass through Indonesian archipelagic seas.

"In this connection, Indonesia's cooperation is being sought and we already have an agreement for many years which arranges for Malaysia to utilise certain rights across the archipelagic seas of Indonesia," he added.

He said the two leaders also expressed their concern over the heavy maritime traffic, especially large ships, in the Melaka Straits and the need for their respective countries and Singapore to discuss ways to relieve the situation.

He said Indonesia would also look into Malaysia's intention to procure sand from it for land reclamation and development purposes.

Dr Mahathir and Suharto were happy with the cooperation between the two countries in the various growth triangles established within Asean, said Alatas.

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