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Anwar-Australia

DEAL WITH US AS PART OF ASIA, CANBERRA TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 16 (Bernama) -- Australia will have to deal with Malaysia as part of Asia since Canberra is slowly moving towards integrating with the region, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

He said Australia should cooperate with Malaysia as "friends, neighbours and as part of the region".

Describing Malaysia-Australia relationship as good, Anwar said Australia's involvement in Asia is a clear signal that the country is moving towards intergrating with the region.

"Australia's participation in Asia is certainly happening and real...There's certainly no turning back," he told reporters after hosting a reception for visiting Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating at the Regent Hotel, here.

Keating arrived here yesterday for a three-day official visit aimed at strengthening bilateral ties.

Anwar said Keating has made it clear that Australia is part of Asia.

"Certainly Asians would like to see this happening in terms of the sincerity to follow through their commitment to be part of the region," he said.

He said that based on his discussions with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this morning and with Keating, he would describe Keating's visit as "very successful".

He said Dr Mahathir had a positive view of his meeting with Keating where a few substantive issues were discussed by the two prime ministers, mainly on economic and trade.

Asked by an Australian reporter if Dr Mahathir's comments today on Keating's visit indicated that there were "still some limitations" in the bilateral relations, Anwar said "relations have been good".

He said private sector's involvement through joint ventures in the two countries had increased tremendously in the last few years. People sometimes tend to chose "one or two incidents and highlight that as major problems" in the relations between the two countries, he said.

"But, it did not actually disrupt the relations. It has gone on and somewhat satisfactory," he added. --BERNAMA