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Banharn-Malaysia

DON'T LET MINOR ISSUES DISTRACT TIES, SAYS THAI PM

KUALA LUMPUR, May 29 (Bernama) -- Thailand and Malaysia must not let minor issues that may arise to distract their close and cordial relations, Thai Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-Archa said tonight.

"We must ensure that minor issues which may arise will not distract us from our endeavours for they are but small irritants when compared to the state of our relations, both now and in the future," he said.

Speaking at a dinner hosted by his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at Sri Perdana, Banharn said there was a need to promote even closer cooperation between the two countries be they bilateral, regional or international.

This, he said, was important for the future prosperity and wellbeing of the peoples of Thailand and Malaysia and the stability and durable security of the region.

The Thai leader said the bilateral ties had laid a firm foundation for the future strengthening of cooperation at the regional and international levels.

Banharn, who arrived here today for a two-day official visit, however said he observed that Thai and Malaysian officials might have in the past "competed too aggressively with each other in the conduct of our bilateral relations".

"Perhaps they had failed to realise that, in the long term, our futures are so closely inter-twined that if we did cooperate with and assist each other more closely, the prosperity and wellbeing which we could achieve for our peoples will know no bounds," he said.

"Indeed, there is much we could achieve together as we have done in the past when Malaysia and Thailand jointly tackled the problem of Communist bandits along our border successfully," he said.

Banharn said in today's era of globalisation, cooperation between Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok had also expanded to cover joint endeavours to promote the prosperity of the region be it under the framework of Asean, the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT), or even the Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem).

"Indeed, our initiatives including the establishment of a Trans-Asia Rail Network linking Singapore, China and onwards to Europe as well as endeavours to develop the Mekong River Basin are now beginning to take shape and will certainly have important repercussions for the future of our region as a whole," he said.

He hoped that for these reasons, Thailand and Malaysia would cooperate even more closely in the future including closer coordination of the policies of the two countries to achieve the long-term goals and objectives.

Describing Dr Mahathir as a visionary and farsighted leader, Banharn said he had no doubt that the Malaysian leader would concur with him on the need to promote closer cooperation between the two countries.

Banharn said the cooperation under the framework of the Malaysia-Thailand Joint Authority which had become a shining example to other countries and the signing of two Memoranda of Understanding on the sale and purchase of natural gas tomorrow was indeed concrete proof of the success of their joint efforts. --BERNAMA

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