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Agong-Argentina

STRATEGIC ALLIANCE KEY TO SUCCESS, SAYS KING

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 22 (Bernama) -- The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar said tonight the private sector of Malaysia and Argentina should be encouraged to form a strategic alliance to jointly participate in the economic development in Southeast Asia and in the South Cone of South America.

He said they could utilise their technological advances, market knowledge and expertise to realise such a cooperation.

"These two dynamic regions offer significant opportunities for our entrepreneurs to work together to tap existing potential," he said at a state banquet hosted in honour of Argentine President Carlos Menem at Istana Negera here.

Menem arrived today to begin a five-day visit to Malaysia.

His Majesty said Malaysia and Argentina can cooperate in many areas by pooling their resources for mutual benefit.

Tuanku Ja'afar said Malaysia-Argentina ties have evolved from mere diplomatic representation into concrete and meaningful relations covering a wide spectrum of activities.

He said several agreements covering economic, scientific and technical cooperation, trade, investment guarantee and partial abolition of visas have already been signed.

"The political will shown by both governments, coupled with the favourable economic environment prevailing in both countries, has provided a unique opportunity for Malaysia and Argentina to develop close economic ties," the King said.

The establishment of direct air links between Kuala Lumpur and Buenos Aires had added a very useful and important dimension in the expansion of the bilateral relations, he said.

Tuanku Ja'afar said there was also tremendous scope for both countries to step up the volume of trade.

Malaysia, with its annual import of more than US\$70 billion (RM175 billion), represents a lucrative market for Argentina's export, not only of its agricultural produce but also its industrial goods and machinery.

In the international arena, the King said Malaysia appreciated Argentina's continuing commitment to the promotion of South-South cooperation.

He said Malaysia believed that opportunities exist for Asean and the South American Mercosur, which groups Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, to work together to facilitate the expansion of trade and closer economic cooperation.

Menem, in his speech, said Argentina's production, finance and trade areas were open to Malaysian business initiatives.

He said business ties, filled with promise, were being increasingly built between the two countries.

"We see with satisfaction the presence in Argentina of Petronas, Malaysia Airlines, Masscorp, Berjaya and other groups," he said, adding that some Argentine companies with Malaysian partners were keen on projects such as the Bakun dam.

He said Argentine and Malaysian companies were exploring the possibility of participating in the "Three Gorges" hydroelectric plant in China and other similar ones in the region.

Menem said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to

Argentina in 1991 was "an important turning point" in Malaysia-Argentina relations.

The Argentine leader said his visit to Malaysia was to increase trade and investment between the two countries. -- BERNAMA

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