

22 JAN 1997

Abdullah-Germany

MALAYSIA, GERMANY KEEN TO EXPAND TIES

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 22 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Germany today agreed to expand bilateral ties to include more cultural and educational exchange programmes, apart from enhancing trade and economic cooperation.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Badawi said Germany had proposed that the two countries sign a cultural agreement to boost bilateral ties, which he described as "good".

"We must now think of an expanded relationship that is not confined to trade but also includes education and science and technology cooperation," he told a news conference after talks with visiting German Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister Dr Klaus Kinkel at Wisma Putra, here.

Kinkel arrived here today for a two-day visit. He was accompanied by a high-level economic delegation which includes Hans-Olf Henkel, the President of the German Federation of Industries.

The German Foreign Minister called on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the Prime Minister's Department here after his meeting with Abdullah.

Abdullah said Kinkel, who is the first German foreign minister to visit Malaysia in 16 years, assured him that Bonn was willing to participate with Malaysia in programmes that would enable it to transfer its technology.

"They welcomed the good relationship and cooperation in the fields of science and technology," he said.

Other topics discussed by the two ministers were on the Spratly islands, Myanmar, Asean and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On Bosnia, Abdullah said Kinkel reacted positively to a proposal that Malaysia and Germany form a partnership to help in the reconstruction of the Balkan state. Kuala Lumpur had made a similar proposal to Japan.

On Myanmar, Abdullah explained to Kinkel that the question over Yangon joining Asean was no longer in dispute.

Abdullah said he also told Kinkel, who wanted to know more about Islam, about the functions of the Institute for Islamic Understanding (Ikim).

On Bonn's bid to secure a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, he said Germany was "well qualified" for the job.

Abdullah said he also informed Kinkel that Malaysia was not ready to discuss the reform of the UN on a "peacemeal basis but in a package formula" which covers all issues and areas of the world body.

On another subject, Abdullah said Malaysia would welcome American military presence in the region if it would preserve and contribute to peace and prosperity.

Abdullah said the Washington's involvement in the region was well established through its participation in the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) and the Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC).

At a separate press briefing, Kinkel described his talks with Dr Mahathir, Anwar and Abdullah as excellent.

"Germany is full of admiration for what Malaysia has achieved in the political and economic fields. You have had for many years now a steady growth of eight per cent," he told reporters after meeting Anwar at the Finance Ministry.

Malaysia had also shown great commitment in organisations like Asean, Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec).

"We specially admire what Malaysia has done to assist us in solving the

problem of Bosnia Herzegovina," he said.

Eventhough it was supposed to be a European problem, he said, Malaysia provided 1,500 troops to the Nato-brokered Implementation Force (Ifor) and continued to support the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) set up following the signing of the Dayton peace accord.

Kinkel said the 39 businessmen in his delegation reflected the importance Germany attached to Malaysia's booming economy.

"We feel we have more to offer Malaysia by way of technology transfer, economic cooperation and training," he said. -- BERNAMA

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