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Abdullah-Singapore

M'SIA-SINGAPORE FACTOR CAN BOOST ECONOMIC RECOVERY, SAYS ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, April 27 (Bernama) -- The Malaysia-Singapore partnership which took off to new heights recently can play a catalytic role in helping to bring about regional economic recovery, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

This was because the two nations were very active trading partners not only within Asean but also in global terms as Malaysia and Singapore belonged to the top 20 nations in the international trade ranking, he said.

"Our cooperation in the areas of banking and finance, investment and more importantly, in regional intra-trade, will be a positive contribution to regional economic recovery," he was quoted as saying in the April issue of the "Smart Investor" magazine.

In its cover story on "Malaysia-Singapore Relations: Prosper Thy Neighbour", the bi-monthly magazine quoted Abdullah as saying in an interview that Malaysia-Singapore trade partnership within Asean could be a major factor within the framework of Asean intra-trade which was being implemented vigorously now.

Abdullah said this when asked about the opportunities for economic cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore in the context of the current regional economic situation.

The minister said he saw the future bilateral relations as being more dynamic and would certainly contribute to enhancing the economic role of the two countries in Asean and perhaps globally.

Asean groups Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

He said both Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Singapore counterpart Goh Chok Tong, in their bilateral meeting recently, had emphasised that the philosophy which should govern Malaysia-Singapore ties should be "prosper thy neighbour".

"It is going to create a win-win situation for both," he said, adding that at the same time, Malaysia and Singapore had already discussed the possibility of both countries joining forces for investment in third countries.

Dr Mahathir and Goh had meet on several occasions this year. Goh also visited Malaysia on Feb 20 and on April 18 when the two leaders jointly opened the Malaysia-Singapore Second Crossing in Johor.

Asked how the bilateral negotiations between Dr Mahathir and Goh proceeded, Abdullah said he was very happy to note that the two leaders carried out their negotiations in an atmosphere of goodwill and friendship.

"Anyone who saw them for the first time would get the impression that that they are two friends.

"All of us who were present during the bilateral negotiations had a feeling that this meeting marked a beginning of another phase of Malaysia-Singapore relations based on goodwill and a spirit of cooperation -- and more importantly an enhanced awareness that there is a very strong and inextricable bonding between the countries as governments and peoples," Abdullah said.

The minister said Malaysia-Singapore relations were special because the two countries shared certain parts of their history such as common political experience, economic problems, administrative and legal systems and development experience.

"There is a great deal of interest in Malaysia among Singaporeans. Many

Singaporeans have their relatives living in Malaysia and vice-versa... Some of my friends in Singapore tell me that their children want to go to their grandparents' place because there will be a lot of durians, mangosteens and perhaps they can chase the chickens around the house.

"So there is this kind of emotional and psychological linkage. While we are separate political entities, we are very closely linked by cultural, social and family ties," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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