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Royal couple impressed with our development

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Queen Elizabeth II said tonight she and her husband Prince Philip were deeply impressed with the infrastructure development taking place in Malaysia.

She said they were particularly impressed with the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, National Stadium Nasional in Bukit Jalil, the light rail transit system as well as the Petronas Twin Towers.

She said she was pleased that British companies and experts played a key partnership role in many of these projects.

"Our economic links are close. In 1996 and again in 1997, Malaysian companies exported goods worth more than STG2 two billion pounds (RM12.8 billion) to the United Kingdom market," she said the Queen in her a speech at a state banquet in her honour at Istana Negara.

"The United Kingdom did not do quite so well, but you are still a major purchaser of British exports.

The Queen said both countries had continued to have close co-operation in the field of education.

She said Britain valued the contribution of Malaysia's youths in this field where as many as 20,000 Malaysians studied in the United Kingdom.

"Our universities, our Government, the British Council and the private sector have all worked together to take specific action to soften the impact on individual students of the currency fluctuation," she said.

"I hope that we shall see more British students studying at Malaysian universities, and on the overseas campuses of their British counterparts established here.

"We want to do everything possible to support Malaysia's ambition to become a regional leader in education."

Earlier, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar said in his speech he hoped the United Kingdom could contribute to a global response to the current crisis in the international financial system.

He said it was Malaysia's hope that the UK, together with the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, would continue to contribute to the recovery and rehabilitation of the Southeast Asian region.

"Malaysia remains committed to working closely with the United Kingdom in fostering a better global environment for development, progress and improved understanding between open tolerant societies committed to peace and prosperity," the King said.

The banquet was also attended by the Duke of Edinburgh Prince Philip, the Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

The King also said Malaysia was delighted that the Queen had officiated at the closing of the 16th Commonwealth Games.

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