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Gus Dur requests another RM760m (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Indonesia has requested an additional US\$200 million (RM760 million) to the US\$100 million credit line extended to it by Petronas to purchase rice.

President Abdurrahman Wahid made the request during talks with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

Abdurrahman also suggested Malaysia send an investment delegation to the republic to enhance trade and investment links.

Dr Mahathir agreed to the proposal.

The leaders met for just over an hour and exchanged views on bilateral and international matters. Also present were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and his Indonesian counterpart Alwi Shihab.

Abdurrahman, popularly known as Gus Dur, arrived for a two-day visit as part of a whirlwind four-day tour of eight Southeast Asian countries. He started with a visit to Singapore.

Syed Hamid said Abdurrahman expressed gratitude to Dr Mahathir for Petronas' assistance.

"They hope Petronas, through its international trading arm, will extend a further US\$200 million to Indonesia," Syed Hamid told reporters.

"Dr Mahathir also suggested that to increase trade, the two countries should look into the establishment of a bilateral payment arrangement where both can benefit - Malaysian exporters and Indonesian importers."

He said the meeting was held in a warm atmosphere and the exchange of ideas was frank.

The talks covered politics, economics, investment, trade and Asean, and the leaders looked at various areas where there should be regular consultation.

Both agreed there should be a close relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia to enhance regional peace and stability.

Syed Hamid said the Indonesians wanted to learn from Malaysia's experience and how it (Malaysia) could contribute to Indonesia's recovery.

"They also spoke of the need to ensure that both countries, which have multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious populations, exchange views on how to promote a sense of togetherness so that any problems will not explode into something that will affect law and order."

He said Dr Mahathir discussed the East Asia Monetary Fund and Abdurrahman said his country was positive about anything that benefited the region.

Asked if the Aceh problem was discussed, Syed Hamid said Indonesia welcomed any assistance in reconciliation.

"Although Malaysia has always maintained a non-interventionist stand, Indonesia has said it would like it if we can contribute in whatever way towards a resolution of the Aceh problem.

"We will discuss what we can do to help."

Syed Hamid also said the issue of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was not raised.

He said the two leaders shared the view that they should not interfere in the internal affairs of each other.

Earlier, Abdurrahman was granted an audience by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah.

Dr Mahathir later hosted a dinner for him.

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