

20 MAY 1999

Malaysia-Indonesia

MAHATHIR AND HABIBIE DISCUSS DEVELOPMENTS AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

BATAM, May 20 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir and Indonesian President B.J.Habibie met today to apprise each other of developments in their countries and to enhance economic cooperation.

Dr Mahathir, who had a 50-minute private session with Habibie before their delegations met, said they also cleared up some minor bilateral issues on trade and logging activities along their common border.

"This meeting is really meant to keep us close together and up-to-date on each other's problems and how we resolve the problems and also to encourage cooperation in the economic field, culture and politically," Dr Mahathir said at a joint news conference, here.

Dr Mahathir described the meeting as very useful and very good for Malaysia and, he believed, also for Indonesia.

It gave them the opportunity to apprise each other of the true situation in their countries and he was happy to note that things were not as bad as reported in the media.

This is the first full-scale bilateral meeting between Dr Mahathir and Habibie since the latter took over from ousted President Suharto last May. They last met during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit in Malaysia last November.

Dr Mahathir was greeted with a traditional welcome and was received by Habibie when he flew in. They travelled in the same vehicle to the seaside resort of Nongsa Point Marina for the meeting.

Dr Mahathir also said he was confident that the Indonesians would elect a good government that would continue to bring good to Indonesia and its people in next month's general election.

"I am confident that the general election will proceed smoothly and in the end, the Indonesians who are known for their nationalistic spirit will surely choose a government that will do a lot of good for Indonesia," he said.

"I am confident that Indonesians who love Indonesia will not forget their responsibility and we in Malaysia feel easy because we know that Indonesia will continue to be developed and peaceful," the prime minister said.

"And a developed and peaceful Indonesia is important to this region, especially for good relations between Malaysia and Indonesia".

Both leaders appeared relaxed at the news conference and President Habibie described Dr Mahathir as a senior and invited him to start the conference.

Habibie, who is the presidential candidate for Parti Golkar in the coming election, said he was thankful to see Dr Mahathir healthy and added "that is most important to me."

Habibie, known for his penchant for technology, said it was appropriate that Malaysia and Indonesia, which shared many similarities especially in culture and language, to step up cooperation to enhance economic efficiency and to raise productivity.

He said productivity would be key as the new millennium and globalisation would bring many changes and stiff competition due to rapid technological advances.

Mahathir was accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah

Aziz.

Habibie's high-profile delegation included Justice Minister Muladi who recently also took over duties as State Secretary, Coordinating Minister for Economy, Finance and Trade Ginandjar Kartasasmita, Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, Defence Minister General Wiranto and Industry Minister Rahadi Ramelan.

On the sidelines, Rafidah also had a ministerial meeting with Kartasasmita and Ramelan while Syed Hamid met Alatas.

-- BERNAMA

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