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Ramos

STEP UP TRADE IN ASEAN GROWTH AREA, SAYS RAMOS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 13 (Bernama) -- Trade in the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines' East Asean Growth area (Bimp-Eaga) should be stepped up now that the region has recovered from the economic crisis, former Philippine President Fidel Ramos said here today.

He said trade within the grouping had slowed down during the economic turmoil, but as the signs of recovery were emerging in Southeast Asian countries, cooperation among the Bimp-Eaga member countries should be renewed.

"Activities within Bimp-Eaga slowed down during the (economic) turmoil...but since that is a common market of some 45 million people, with complementation all around happening...we in the Philipines feel that we must reinforce regional economic cooperation," he told reporters after meeting Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob at his office, here.

Asked if he was satisfied with bilateral ties between Malaysia and the Phillipines, the ex-president said the two countries must not feel satisfied but should always continue to strengthen and expand cooperation.

Ramos is here on the invitation of Khalil who made the invitation when he was Menteri Besar of Pahang. Yesterday, Ramos visited Pahang and held talks with Khalil's successor, Datuk Adnan Yaakob.

Ramos, who was president for six years until June 30 last year, said he would do whatever he could to strengthen economic ties between the Philippines and Malaysia.

According to statistics, Malaysian investments in the Philippines reached their highest levels during the Ramos administration, thanks to his pro-business policy.

Ramos now chairs a foundation named after himself, Ramos Peace and Development Foundation.

He is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Wednesday.

Asked about the agenda of his meeting with Dr Mahathir he said: "There is no agenda but I will certainly promote our stronger economic ties...which during my time as president were especially strong because of so many joint projects."

-- BERNAMA

NM JK