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Agong-Megawati

MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION STILL EXIST, SAYS KING

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 27 (Bernama) -- Many opportunities still exist for cooperation between Malaysia and Indonesia to boost bilateral ties to a greater and more meaningful level, said the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah tonight.

He said the process of globalisation had brought many changes to the world's political and economic situation, the negative effects of which could threaten the independence and sovereignty of a nation.

Realising this, there was a need for both countries to continue to foster and enhance close cooperation in all fields and at all levels to ensure the security and prosperity of both.

He said this at a dinner reception hosted for visiting Indonesian president Megawati Soekarnoputri at the Istana Negara here.

Megawati arrived here today for a two-day visit on her final leg of nine-nation tour of Asean countries. Her 60-member entourage includes her husband, Taufiq Kiemas.

Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Siti Aishah was present at the reception which was also attended by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Datin Seri Dr Hasmah Mohamed Ali and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Sultan Salahuddin hoped that the mechanisms set by the joint commission and joint border committee would play an important role in strengthening ties and cooperation as well as serving as the official channel to find solution to any arising problems.

He said both countries should work towards bringing peace and prosperity to both.

"Realising this, Malaysia and Indonesia have signed several economic and trade cooperation agreements which have produced satisfactory results," he said.

Sultan Salahuddin said the volume of bilateral trade had increased from AS\$578.9 million (US1=RM3.80) in 1990 to AS\$3.10 billion in 2000.

In fact, he said Malaysia ranked as Indonesia's 11th biggest investor with approved investment of AS\$3.3 billion in 410 projects.

In addition to efforts to expand the scope of cooperation, both countries had continued to work together to develop their border areas under the concept of cooperation of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT), Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle (IMS-GT) and Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), he said.

He said Malaysia supported efforts taken by the Indonesian government under the leadership of Megawati towards the country's peace and prosperity.

In her speech, Megawati said Malaysia and Indonesia have a solid and precious foundation to expand and strengthen their bilateral relationship.

"Let us turn a new page in our relations," she said, adding that with goodwill and firm determination both countries could resolve their common problems.

Both countries must admit that they had been experiencing ups and downs in their relationship and at times had acted rationally and with full of wisdom but at other times had behaved emotionally, she said.

She said the fraternal relation and friendship had their strong roots in the cultures, traditions and religion commonly embraced by the people

and societies of both nations.

"Our willingness and courage to learn from our past weaknesses and mistakes will, in turn, revitalise our potential capacity to best contribute to greater peace and equitable progress in the world," she said.

Megawati said that through the Joint Commission of Malaysia and Joint Border Committee the two countries could discuss a wide range of issues, including security and socio-economic matters.

She said the bilateral talks held earlier would serve as an impetus for the officials to work even harder to resolve issues of common concern for the two countries' mutual benefit.

In the framework of Asean cooperation, she stressed the need for strengthening national stability, maintaining sustained economic growth, enhancing regional competitiveness and promoting cooperation among its members.

"I am of the view that only if it stands stable, united and has clear vision will Asean be able to cope with these challenges," she said.

She hoped that her visit would help to strengthen existing relations between the two countries.

-- BERNAMA

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