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Kyrgyz-Bridge

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC SET TO BECOME "BRIDGE" TO CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 7 (Bernama) -- The Republic of Kyrgyz, which has undergone rapid political and economic transformation, is set to become a leading economic power and a "bridge" to the central Asian countries.

Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev said today that the republic, which is now more investor-friendly with the most liberal economic reforms in terms of domestic and international trade, was the best gateway to the Central Asian market.

The revival of the Great Silk Road, which connects Asia to Europe, by means of trade and economic, cultural and humanitarian and also political and diplomatic ties, had made the republic a bridge of friendship and cooperation with neighbouring countries and between the two continents, he said.

"It is of great significance to the revival of the Great Silk Road which could promote not only economic activities between the countries but also in terms of exchange of movements, goods, knowledge, technology and people," he told Bernama and TV3, via an interpreter, in an interview at the end of his visit to Malaysia.

This is Akayev's second visit to Malaysia. His first was in 1995.

The Kyrgyz president said that the country was working on a project to build a railway linking China with central Asia through Kyrgyzstan, forming part of the transcontinental rail that links Shanghai with Paris.

"(Prime Minister Datuk Seri) Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) had also discussed the possibility of linking the rail road with Malaysia. It will be another revival of the Great Silk Road that will open up the unseen opportunities for the countries of central Asia to develop trade, economic and cultural cooperation with the countries of Southeast Asia," he said.

Describing his three-day state visit as fruitful and beneficial, Akayev was full of praise for Dr Mahathir whom he described as an outstanding leader for Malaysia and the developing nations.

He also hailed the contribution of Malaysia, especially the prime minister, in assisting the republic to carry out its comprehensive 10-year development plan.

It had enabled Kyrgyzstan to be one of the most progressive countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, said Akayev who had called on Malaysian businessmen to invest in the country's expanding tourism and related industries, agriculture and food processing, textile industry and information communication technology (ICT).

He said the country was going all out to provide a conducive environment for business to attract more foreign direct investment (FDI) and planned to set up a Free Trade Zone (FTZ) for Malaysian entrepreneurs.

Akayev said the establishment of direct flights between the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, and Kuala Lumpur is another revival of the Great Silk Road which could enhance and strengthen bilateral relations and economic ties between the two countries.

The mountainous landlocked country surrounded by China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan celebrates its independence day on Aug 31, the same as Malaysia.

On politics and diplomatic ties, the president said Kyrgyzstan and Malaysia, which are members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), could work together in promoting peace and security in the world.

During his visit, Akayev took the opportunity to seek Malaysia's

support to set up a dialogue between the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the OIC to foster better understanding of Islam and to identify the causes of terrorism and religious extremism.

He said the international dialogue would convene in Bishkek next year and so far, a dozen countries had agreed to attend.

"The dialogue aims at promoting understanding between the countries of the OSCE and OIC and helping to develop strategies to combat terrorism as well as solving the problem of terrorism," he said.

There was a need for a single international front against terrorism, Akayev said, adding that terrorism had nothing to do with religion or ethnicity.

-- BERNAMA

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