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Croatia-President

MANY POTENTIAL AREAS FOR CROATIA-MALAYSIA COOPERATION

By: R.Ravichandran

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 18 (Bernama) -- Visiting Croatian President Stjepan Mesic said there are many potential areas in which Croatia and Malaysia can cooperate and further develop their relationship.

This cooperation could extend beyond the economic field to other possible fields including culture and sports, he told Bernama through an interpreter in an exclusive interview here today.

Mesic said this was possible as Croatia and Malaysia did not have any outstanding political issues.

Croatia was keen to develop stronger ties with countries outside of Europe like Malaysia, Mesic said.

"I believe our relationship and cooperation can be developed on a broader scale involving the two regions of Europe and Asia and our two countries. So I think we have got a pioneering task to establish and develop this," he said.

Mesic, 68, who is the first Croatian head of state to visit Malaysia, arrived here yesterday for a five-day state visit, accompanied by a 20-member delegation.

According to President Mesic, the Croatian and Malaysian economies were compatible and as such the two countries could cooperate in agriculture, pharmaceutical industry, processing sector and various other industries.

"That is why we have brought a group of businessmen who I believe can find opportunities for cooperation with their Malaysian counterparts," the President said.

Croatia could be the gateway for Malaysian products to a larger European market and Malaysia was also in a strategic location for Croatian products to this part of the region, he said.

Mesic said his country was a young nation but with a long history and was keen to emulate Malaysia's success especially in the area of economic and political stability.

"Malaysia has always been an example to Croatia on how to achieve success. This is one more reason why Malaysia is important to Croatia," he said.

Mesic expressed his appreciation to Malaysia for being one of the earliest countries to recognise Croatia after it declared its independence from the former Yugoslavia in 1991.

"This is certainly something Croatia will not forget," the president said.

Describing the current relationship between Croatia and Malaysia as "very friendly", Mesic said this augured well for cooperation in many fields.

Touching on globalisation, Mesic said it would have both positive as well as negative effects on the world.

"We certainly support the position which helps eliminate negative effects. Our cooperation with this region and Malaysia will certainly be conducive to achieving this positive goal," he said.

Croatia, a Roman Catholic nation of some 4.5 million people, is located in the middle of Europe.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad made official visits to Croatia in December 1994 and April 1996 and the then Croatian Prime Minister Zlatko Matesa reciprocated the visit in March 1997.

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