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Terrorism-agreement

M'ISIA, INDONESIA AND THE PHILIPPINES SIGN TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT ON
TERRORISM

PUTRAJAYA, May 7 (Bernama) -- Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines today signed a tripartite agreement to combat transnational crime and terrorism in the wake of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

The signing of the agreement on Exchange of Information and Establishment of Communication Procedures was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Philippine President Gloria Arroyo.

The Philippine leader is on a one-day official visit to Malaysia to attend the 35th International General Meeting of the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC).

Prior to the signing ceremony, Dr Mahathir and Arroyo had a four-eye meeting at his office.

The agreement was inked by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar on behalf of Malaysia, his Indonesian counterpart Hassan Wirajuda and the Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose D. Lina Jr., for the Philippines.

Speaking to reporters later, Syed Hamid said a joint committee at the official level would be set up to handle issues involving transnational crimes such as smuggling and terrorism.

"The committee will identify the framework of cooperation needed in our waters and at our border to ensure safe passage for the transnational travellers from the three countries," he said.

Syed Hamid said the agreement would not be limited to the three countries but open to any Asean countries interested in becoming signatories to the agreement.

"There are indications that other Asean countries are also interested in joining," he said.

Asked whether the agreement was made to reject the claim by certain quarters that the three countries were centres of terrorist activities, Syed Hamid said it was never proved that the region was a centre of terrorism.

However, he said the agreement would show to the world that the three countries were determined in their efforts to wipe out transnational crimes to ensure peace in the region.

On the meeting between Dr Mahathir and Arroyo, he said it was on bilateral ties and Arroyo was satisfied with the outcome.

Meanwhile, speaking at a news conference after delivering a keynote address at the on-going Conference of Endowment and Islamic Affairs Ministers in Kuala Lumpur earlier today, Dr Mahathir said the signing of the pact would be useful.

He said this was because the authorities involved would be able to exchange information about the movements and activities of militants.

Dr Mahathir said: "As you know, these people have this idea of forming what they call a single Islamic state out of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

"But what is their Islamic state I don't know because I haven't seen them do anything. (But) they do a lot of damage to the people, carry out a lot of terrorist attacks and things like that."

-- BERNAMA

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