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Mahathir-Thailand

MSIA-THAILAND MUST HAVE CLOSER TIES

ALOR STAR, Dec 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said that Malaysia and Thailand, being close neighbours, should step up cooperation at both the official and social levels as this will benefit bilateral trade as well as the peoples of both countries.

Closer ties would also ensure a stable and peaceful environment for both countries and develop increased opportunities for greater cooperation in other areas, he said at the opening of the Malaysia-Thailand 300/600 MW High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Interconnection project in Gurun, Kedah.

He said that the project, reflective of the increased cooperation between them, could lead to further cooperation and sharing of energy between Malaysia and Thailand.

"There are times when we will have to buy energy from Thailand and Thailand to buy from us. This is the kind of cooperation that we want to promote," he said.

Dr Mahathir jointly opened the Interconnection project with Thai Prime Minister Dr Thaksin Shinatwatra at a hotel here.

Also present were Minister of Energy, Communications and Multimedia Datuk Amar Leo Moggie, Thailand's Minister of Energy, Pongthep Thepkanchana and chairman of Tenaga Nasional Bhd Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussain.

In his speech, Thaksin said the completion of the project is seen as a significant milestone in aspirations to develop a fully integrated Asean Interconnected Transmission Grid.

He said cooperation in the project would be further strengthened and help to realise the common objective which could contribute to the prosperity of the two countries.

In commending Dr Mahathir for his stewardship and bringing Malaysia-Thai ties closer together, Thaksin said that although Dr Mahathir has voiced his intention to leave office, he is very much a statesman of the nation.

"He still has many ideas which can bring the region closer together," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that to make the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) a reality, Malaysia would like to take a step further in expanding ties such as in transportation with Thailand, including developing better rail connections between the two countries.

"We would also like to have new border crossings and extend the border office hours late into the night or even operating 24 hours per day, so that people from both countries can travel (in and out) easily, thus enhancing relations between them," he added.

He also said that by enhancing infrastructure and facilities linking the two countries, bilateral trade between Malaysia and Thailand would gradually increase.

"We look forward for more cooperation in other fields as well and in the process establish more goodwill which would benefit the peoples of both countries," he said.

The HVDC project, specially undertaken by TNB and Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT), is the first of its kind for the two countries.

The agreement would allow EGAT and TNB to trade their electricity power supply between them.

The shared power supply would be channelled through a high voltage

direct current (HVDC) system connection.

The HVDC system, in operation since May, connects a 110 kilometre transmission line between a 500/275k V DC converter substation in Gurun, Kedah and a 230k VDC converter substation in Khlong Ngae, Thailand.

Among the features of the HVDC advanced technology is the ability to control and determine power transfers as well as being capable of transferring power between the two countries during system disturbances and emergencies.

TNB said that the agreement was a major step to realising Asean Interconnected Transmission Grid, a project to complement and supplement power systems between neighbouring countries and utilities.

The first stage of the 300/600 mw HVDC interconnection project between Malaysian and Thailand was completed and put into commercial operation on Sept 20, 2001.

The project was jointly undertaken by TNB and EGAT at a total cost of about RM400 million.

Currently, there are a number of other HVDC systems in India, Japan and the Pacific Rim but they only provide links between various power companies within the country.

The HVDC interconnection provides a range of diverse benefits such as Spinning Reserve Sharing for Operational/Power Security Purposes, Economic Power Exchange for Operating Cost Optimisation and Emergency Assistance under System Disturbances.

The 300 MW HVDC interconnection scheme, upgradeable to 600 megawatts, is made up of a 110 km HVDC over headline (85km in TNB, 25km in EGAT) with a direct converter station at Gurun on the Malaysian side and Khlong Ngae, on the Thailand side.

The converter station is currently constructed for monopolar operation for power transfer of 300 megawatts in both direction.

The HVDC interconnection scheme is capable on continuous operation at a reduced DC voltage of 210 kV over the whole load range up to the rated DC current of 1000A. The minimum power transfer is rated at 30 MW.

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