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Timor-Malaysia

TIMOR LOROSAE REGARDS M'ISIA AS BEST EXAMPLE FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT

PUTRAJAYA, Aug 12 (Bernama) -- The newly-independent nation of Timor Lorosae is looking to Malaysia to help in its socio-economic development as it regards the country as the best model for development planning and resource management.

An agricultural nation with a largely rich untapped oil and gas resources, Timor Lorosae is looking for cooperative ventures with Malaysia in as many areas as possible, its visiting prime minister, Dr Mari Bim Amude Alkatiri, said today.

Dr Mari, who arrived here yesterday at the head of a 27-member high-level delegation including 17 businessmen, made these comments during a meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Dr Mahathir Mohamad here.

Briefing reporters on the outcome of the meeting which lasted for more than an hour, Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Dr Leo Michael Toyad said that Malaysia was willing to assist Timor Lorosae in education, industrial development, agriculture, as well as joint ventures in the oil and gas industry through Petronas.

Besides this, Malaysia was willing to train the police and military forces of the new democratic nation which has a population of 800,000.

In a 1999 referendum, Timor Lorosae, then known as Timor Timor or East Timor, voted to secede from Indonesia which annexed it on July 16, 1976.

The United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET) governed the territory from 1999 until nationhood was declared on May 20, 2002.

Its capital and largest city is Dili which has a population of 65,000 while the country's economy is primarily based on fishing and farming with unemployment at 70 per cent.

Its natural resources include offshore oil and gas while its exports comprise coffee, oil and natural gas, timber, fishery products, spices, coconuts and cacao while its major trading partners are Australia and Portugal.

Meanwhile, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, when met on the sidelines of the meeting, said that Malaysia would look to helping the former Indonesian colony through investments in downstream and export-oriented sectors.

She said that Timor Lorosae was also seeking consultations with Petronas for assistance in setting up infrastructure facilities to help develop its oil and gas sector.

The delegation will meet Petronas officials later today.

Malaysia also offered Timor Lorosae whatever experience it has in the setting up of a government administration, infrastructure, investments and industry, Rafidah added.

-- BERNAMA

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