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Bername-Exchange

BERNAMA AND APS TO BRIDGE GAP THROUGH NEWS EXCHANGE

By: Mokhtar Hussain

ALGIERS, Aug 12 (Bernama) -- Malaysian national news agency, Bernama has on Tuesday inked a news exchange agreement with its Algerian counterpart, Algerie Presse Service (APS) to facilitate the flow of information between the two countries aimed at enhancing bilateral ties.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with APS is the ninth news exchange agreement to be signed by Bernama with West Asian and North African Islamic countries.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Algerian counterpart Ahmed Ouyahia.

Bername was represented by its General Manager Datuk Syed Jamil Jaafar, while APS by its Director-General Mr Nacer Mehal.

The news exchange agreement is part of a move to realise the idea of the South-South Information Gateway (SSIG) which was mooted by Dr Mahathir during the 1999 Langkawi International Dialogue (LID).

In his speech during a state dinner last night, Dr Mahathir said that the agreement would help to generate better understanding between the people of both countries, which in turn, would strengthen bilateral relations.

According to a statement issued by Bernama here, the MoU provides for cooperation and exchange of news and pictures on a daily basis. It also provides for mutual assistance and exchange of journalists.

It said that the signing of the MoU is part of Bernama's efforts to build "bridges" or channels of communication with all these countries.

This is done with the realisation that all forms of cooperation must be preceded by an active exchange of information.

APS, Algeria's News Agency, was founded on Dec 1, 1961 in the wake of the national liberation war.

It first launched its computerised editorial office in January 1994 before launching its broadcast via satellite four years later. APS provides its services in three languages - Arabic, French and English.

To facilitate this exchange of news and information with the Arab-speaking nations, Bernama launched its Arab language service in October last year.

This service sends out eight to 10 stories to 17 Arab-speaking nations daily. The articles and news are on such topics as the Islamic gold dinar, Islamic insurance and banking in Malaysia, tourism, politics, Malaysia's economic development and other subjects of interest to the Muslim nations.

These news and information are also carried on Bernama's Arabic language website: www.bernama.com/arabic

From feedback received, many of the articles and news put out by Bernama are used by the media in these countries.

The Gulf States in particular have been using many news and articles on Malaysian business and economic activities.

Bername is expected to sign a similar agreement with the Syrian News Agency (SANA) during the Dr Mahathir's visit to Damascus next week.

To date, Bernama has signed the MoU with news agencies from Qatar (QNA), Yemen (SABA), UAE (WAM), Morocco (MAP), Tunisia (TAP), Iran (IRNA), Egypt (MENA) and Turkey (Anadolu).

Other MoU's to be signed in the near future will involve Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the Omani News Agency (ONA), and the Libyan news agency (JANA).

According to the statement, Bernama is also negotiating with the Jordanian news agency (Petra), the news agency of Palestine (WAFA) and the news agency of Afghanistan.

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