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Agong-Cooperation

KING TELLS SOUTH COUNTRIES TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 (Bernama) -- Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail has urged countries of the South to step up cooperation to tackle multiple challenges in the 21st century.

He said the current global political and economic scenario was characterised by multiple challenges, in particular the emergence of unipolarism and unilateralism.

"There is, therefore, a need for countries in the developing South to work more closely together in order to face and surmount these challenges," he said at a state banquet in honour of South African President Thabo Mbeki at Istana Negara here tonight.

Also present were Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah Tengku Abdul Rashid and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The King said Malaysia and South Africa could see eye-to-eye on most international issues and this common stance could reinforce each other since Malaysia's largest private sector investment in Africa was in South Africa while Malaysia was South Africa's largest trading partner in the continent.

"The strong historical and cultural links between our people, which had remained dormant for centuries, had provided a natural environment for the exchange of information and experience in terms of our development," he said.

He said Malaysia was pleased that it was able to contribute and lend its support to the South African people's struggle for freedom and democracy.

He said Malaysia had witnessed the courageous struggle for freedom and justice of the South Afrikaners which had become the source of pride of all democratic nations.

"We also view South Africa as the vital force of freedom and stability and the motivating force for social economic development throughout the African continent," he said.

His Majesty said Malaysia had been following closely the leadership of Mbeki in managing the country, socio-economic upliftment and resolving problems faced by the developing world, particularly in the African continent.

He said Malaysia held in high regard Mbeki's exemplary leadership in addressing the challenges posed by political and economic instability, conflict situations, poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

"Your initiative in the creation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) will surely result in faster development of the countries of Africa," he added.

He also hoped that the visit by Mbeki would further consolidate bilateral ties, and strengthen economic and technical cooperation between the two countries.

"The joint advancement of our bilateral cooperation, particularly through the signing of the agreement on Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation and the Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of a Joint Commission Meeting, will result in more opportunities being made available to our peoples in a truly win-win formula," he said.

-- BERNAMA

AT MFJ YBY

