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Abdullah-Laos

LAOS INVITES MORE MALAYSIAN INVESTMENTS TO ENHANCE BILATERAL TIES

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

VIENTIANE, Jan 19 (Bernama) -- Laos has invited Malaysian companies to invest more in this country to enhance bilateral co-operation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

Laotian Prime Minister Bounnhang Vorachith extended the invitation during his meeting with Abdullah, who arrived here today for a one-day visit as part of his courtesy calls on leaders of Asean countries.

Abdullah said although his visit here was brief, it had given him an opportunity to discuss with Vorachith a number of bilateral issues.

"We agreed that our bilateral relations are good, there are no factors which impeded or caused uneasiness between our two countries," he told Malaysian journalists before leaving for Manila later today.

Abdullah had so far paid courtesy calls on Asean leaders in Bandar Seri Begawan, Jakarta, Singapore and Bangkok since he became prime minister on Oct 31, last year.

Laos, with a population of five million, had acknowledged that Malaysian investors had run their operations well in this country, said Abdullah.

He said Laos also hoped that the Malaysian company which had been awarded a contract to build a five-star hotel here could complete it by the end of September as it would be the venue for the forthcoming Asean Summit in November. Laos will host the summit for the first time.

Prior to the media conference, Abdullah witnessed the signing of a loan agreement totalling US\$14 million for the Don Chan Palace Hotel and Tourist Complex Project between Export and Import Bank of Malaysia and Sun Trading Co Ltd.

Exim Bank was represented by its chairman, Tan Sri Othman Mohd Rijal, while Sun Trading was represented by its managing director, Cheok Tiam Cheng.

Abdullah also met Malaysians currently working in Laos and extended new year greetings to those celebrating the Chinese Lunar New Year.

Saying that he was satisfied with their contributions in helping Malaysia to be the fourth largest investor in Laos, he said the areas where Malaysian companies could invest further were tourism, infrastructure development, information and communication technology, and human resource development.

He said the Joint Commission Meeting between Malaysia and Laos would be held in May this year to discuss follow-up measures on his discussions with Vorachith today.

Abdullah also paid a courtesy call on Laotian President Khamtay Siphandone.

This is the first visit by a Malaysian prime minister to Laos after it became a member of Asean in July 1997. Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was here in 1994.

Abdullah was met on arrival at the Wattay International Airport by Laotian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Somsavat Lengsavad and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, who arrived here last night.

Soon after his arrival, Abdullah headed for a welcoming ceremony at the National Assembly where he was greeted by Vorachith, who visited Malaysia in 2001.

His visit to Laos is significant as Abdullah, then foreign minister, had chaired the Asean Ministerial Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 1997 that had

witnessed the admission of Laos and Myanmar as the eighth and ninth members of the regional grouping. Cambodia joined the fold two years later.

Abdullah is scheduled to visit Phnom Penh, Hanoi and Yangon next week to complete his courtesy calls,

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