

M'sia, Indonesia agree to settle Sulawesi Sea issue
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Malaysia and Indonesia have agreed to settle the issue of Sulawesi Sea waters completely as it had been deferred for too long.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak said a complete solution would require a form of comprehensive decision acceptable to both countries soon.

Najib said even though there were progresses on the issue of the waters of Sulawesi, both countries agreed to find a form of comprehensive solution.

Speaking in a joint statement after the Annual Malaysia-Indonesia Consultation at Istana Kepresidenan in Jakarta yesterday, Najib said even though there was little progress made through the special envoys of both countries, a comprehensive solution was needed so that both countries could finally accept an agreeable decision.

The consultation series between Malaysia and Indonesia had been held since 10 years ago to resolve issues on border areas while the rights of waters in southern Sulawesi had yet to see a final decision.

Najib said at the consultation that the Malaysian government had agreed to seek a process on protecting the rights of Indonesian workers in Malaysia.

He said the human resource ministries of both countries would be coming out with various proposals to resolve arising matters, including raising the level of foreign worker skills.

Among the members of the Malaysian delegation were Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister Ahmad Shabery Cheek, Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein, Education Minister Mahadzir Khalid and Bank Negara governor Muhammad Ibrahim.

The 11th Malaysia-Indonesia Consultation was the first between Najib and President Joko Widodo since Jokowi was appointed as president of Indonesia in 2014.

Jokowi (*photo*) in his statement said Indonesia welcomed the ongoing consultations and hoped several positive decisions could be achieved through further consultations.

He said among the matters discussed in the consultation were issues on Indonesian workers, maritime as well as those pertaining to economic cooperation.

In the consultation, Najib also raised the issue of economic cooperation between the two countries.

He said, Malaysia was the second largest investor in Indonesia and both countries wanted their bilateral trade to exceed US\$30 billion (RM121.2 billion) in the years to come.

Positive measures of Indonesia commended

Najib said Malaysia also commended the positive measures taken by Indonesia to reduce bureaucracy to ensure the country would be more investor-friendly.

"This is a success and the good measures were taken under the leadership of President Jokowi. Malaysia as the second largest investor in Indonesia welcomes the development," he said.

Malaysia and Indonesia had set the bilateral trade target of US\$30 billion in 2015, but it was not achieved due to unfavourable economic climate.

Apart from that, Malaysia also appreciated several business opportunities awarded by Indonesia to Malaysian companies and today, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the scope of low-cost housing in Indonesia is due to be signed.

"For the MOU, three Indonesian companies will also be involved. These are among the examples of Malaysia's contributions to the infrastructure development of Indonesia, which is the main agenda under Jokowi's leadership," Najib said.

On the agreement between the Indonesian government and the Council of Palm Oil Producer Countries (CPOPC) on the council's secretariat, Najib said it was very important as palm oil was an important crop to the people of both countries.

The establishment of CPOPC would strengthen further cooperation among palm oil producer countries and address issues affecting the commodity.

Both countries are major palm oil producers, contributing 85 percent of the world's production and 91.2 percent of the world's export.

"We have had agreements and quick actions to protect the interests of both countries. It is not just about marketing but also joint research to make palm oil as a product acceptable all over the world," Najib said.

- *Bernama*

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