

M'sia, Brunei to initiate discussions on Pan-Borneo Highway network

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Malaysia and Brunei are set to initiate discussions on the Pan-Borneo Highway network to improve connectivity and accelerate economic and social growth between them.

In a Malaysia-Brunei joint statement released in conjunction with the 20th Annual Leaders Consultation between Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and the Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, in Putrajaya today, they recalled their discussions on the importance of improving and upgrading highway networks in both countries to facilitate connectivity between Sabah and Sarawak, with Brunei.

"They urged officials of both countries to initiate discussions on the Pan-Borneo Highway network as improvement in connectivity would accelerate economic and social growth between both countries," said the statement.

The Pan-Borneo Highway project with a distance of 2,325km from Telok Melano to Lawas in Sarawak and from Sindumin to Tawal in Sabah is expected to be completed by 2021.

Both leaders in the statement also reiterated the importance of defence cooperation in maintaining peace and stability in light of growing security challenges and threats in the region.

They expressed satisfaction with the existing bilateral cooperation in defence, which continues to strengthen through meetings, exchanges of views, regular exchanges of visits, training courses and military exercises between the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) and the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF).

They further noted the excellent engagements between RBAF and MAF and commended the admirable efforts in contributing towards the maintenance of international peace and stability, particularly under the ambit of the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon and the International Monitoring Team in southern Philippines.

The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to maritime cooperation and urged officials of both countries to continue discussions towards increasing collaboration in this area, with a view to having a memorandum of understanding in maritime cooperation.

Both leaders also noted that officials of Malaysia and Brunei were currently discussing matters relating to fisheries cooperation and encouraged them to conclude the discussion expeditiously, with a view to having a memorandum of understanding pertaining to it.

According to the joint statement, they also urged the Brunei Darussalam-Sarawak Tourism Working Group to intensify cooperation and collaboration in the areas of accessibility and connectivity, marketing and promotion as well as safety and security.

Najib and Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah also expressed pleasure at the encouraging tourist arrivals between both countries and urged officials to continue working together to further strengthen tourism cooperation.

Both leaders also were satisfied with the efforts of both countries in addressing the threat of emerging and re-emerging infectious disease such as the threat of the Zika virus.

They also urged the continued commitment of the joint technical teams in expediting efforts to conclude the joint demarcation and survey of the land boundary between Malaysia and Brunei, particularly in priority areas.

- *Bernama*