

Ambalat claims no snag

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Pak Lah says economic ties not affected by territorial issues

JAKARTA: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Malaysia and Indonesia will never allow border issues to be an obstacle to bilateral economic cooperation.

The Prime Minister said such issues were being handled by the joint technical expert committee, with the 10th meeting scheduled in Penang soon.

"The boundary between both countries, including the question on Ambalat (Blocks ND6 and ND7) in the Sulawesi Sea, is being discussed at the technical level and everything is progressing smoothly.

"It does not need any intervention from the leaders, whether by (Indonesian) President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono or me," he said in an exclusive interview with the 24-hour radio news station "Elshinta" here yesterday.

The dispute on the Ambalat sea said to be rich in oil and gas deposits, had previously raised strong and emotional reaction from Indonesians following the overlapping claims by Malaysia and Indonesia.

However, Abdullah and Susilo had agreed that the matter be resolved through negotiation.

Abdullah said both countries were hopeful that the technical discussion by experts on the sea and land boundary issue would achieve results.

"Both President Susilo and I hope that there will be a meeting point which will pave the way for us to forge cooperation for the benefit of our peoples," he said.

Abdullah said the frequent contacts between Susilo and him had helped nurture close personal relations between them, and between both countries.

He said the efforts taken by the



Scouts honour: Abdullah being greeted by Malaysian scouts representatives in Jakarta. He is scheduled to receive the Lencana Tunas Kencana, the Indonesian scouts medal. — Bernama

technical experts had also removed any apprehension between Malaysia and Indonesia.

Malaysia was Indonesia's biggest investor last year.

Indonesia had approved Malaysian investments totalling US\$2.2bil in 2006. Last year, total trade between Malaysia and Indonesia stood at RM33bil, with Malaysian imports

from Indonesia amounting to RM18.1bil while Malaysia's exports there stood at RM14.9bil.

Abdullah said in his bilateral meeting with Susilo at Istana Merdeka today, he would also give emphasis on economic cooperation especially in new areas such as oil and palm-based fuel where the world market was being dominated

by Malaysia and Indonesia.

Abdullah, who arrived here yesterday on a two-day working visit at the invitation of Susilo, will be conferred the Indonesian state award, Adi Pradana, the highest Indonesian award for a foreign leader, as well as the Indonesian scout medal, Lencana Tunas Kencana. — Bernama