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PRIME NEWS

Better ties through 5 key areas

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COMMON PLATFORM:
KL, Jakarta agree to form mechanisms to resolve outstanding issues

**AZURA ABAS
AND KOI KYE LEE**
PUTRAJAYA
news@nst.com.my

MALAYSIA and Indonesia yesterday agreed to enhance bilateral ties in five strategic areas, namely maritime, labour, education, trade and investment.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who held bilateral talks with visiting Indonesian President Joko Widodo yesterday, described the session as a productive one which exemplified both countries' political desire to move forward.

With Joko at his side, Najib said both governments had agreed to establish additional mechanisms that could resolve outstanding issues.

"The president and I had a productive discussion that portrays our political will to boost bilateral ties between Malaysia and Indonesia.

"For unresolved issues, we have agreed to set up extra mechanisms that can provide solutions," he told a joint press conference after the

meeting at Perdana Putra.

This is the first foreign bilateral visit by Joko — the hugely popular former Jakarta governor — since becoming president in October.

Maritime boundary was one of the issues the leaders had discussed at length in the hour-long meeting.

Najib said Malaysia and Indonesia would continue finding solutions, even adopting two approaches, namely establishing a technical committee and appointing a special envoy each from both nations, to kick-start exploratory talks.

The issue of Indonesian domestic helpers was also heavily discussed during the meeting, with both leaders recognising the need to have a single official channel to bring in maids into Malaysia.

On the issue of fishermen who encroached on overlapping maritime areas, Najib said they would be turned away. Those who encroached on Malaysian or Indonesian waters would be considered intruders and action would be taken.

The two leaders also agreed that *Sekolah Indonesia* in Sabah would be extended to Sarawak for the education of the children of Indonesian workers in the state.

"The right to education as advocated by the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation is a universal right that cannot be denied," said Najib.

The Indonesian school initiative, to shape quality human capital, was realised after a meeting between for-



mer president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Jan 11, 2008.

There are around 50 such schools in Sabah.

On bilateral trade, Najib said the lethargic economy would make it tough to achieve the projected US\$30 billion (RM106.4 billion) target for this year, as only US\$18.25 billion was recorded last year.

Indonesia is Malaysia's sixth largest trading partner globally and third largest trading partner among Asean member countries.

In 2013, total trade between the

two countries was recorded at RM61.1 billion (US\$194 billion) and RM54.7 billion (US\$16.9 billion) from January until November last year.

The prime minister also welcomed investors from Indonesia as Malaysia had invested US\$3.97 billion between 2008 and September last year. Investments from Indonesia stood at US\$1.9 billion.

Najib also lauded the economic reforms adopted by Joko's administration, especially on reducing bureaucracy and fighting corruption.

The prime minister also expressed Malaysia's condolences over the Indonesia AirAsia Flight QZ8501

tragedy, which killed all 162 passengers and crew.

Joko, meanwhile, said he shared Najib's views on improving ties between Indonesia and Malaysia. Indonesia, he said, wanted to see a quick response to tackle issues relevant to both countries.

The Indonesian president also invited Malaysian investors to venture into several sectors, including railway, energy and port development.

Najib later hosted Joko and First Lady Iriana Joko Widodo to an official luncheon at Seri Perdana.

Additional reporting by A. Azim Idris

Proton chief executive officer Datuk Abdul Harith Abdullah (right) and PT Adiperkasa Citra Lestari chief executive officer Abdullah Mahmud Hendropriyono exchanging documents after the signing of a memorandum of understanding for both companies to develop Indonesia's national car at Proton's plant in Shah Alam yesterday. With them are (from left) Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, Indonesian President Joko Widodo, former prime minister and Proton chairman Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Malaysian ambassador to Indonesia Datuk Seri Zahrair Hashim. Pic by Effendy Rashid

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