

**Durians Boost Friendly And Diplomatic Relations, Says Rais
Bernama
January 18, 2012**

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 18 (Bernama) -- Exports of durian fruits to China since July last year has widened understanding of the foreign countries on the Malaysian culture besides bringing economic benefits, said Information Communication and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim.

He said the permission from the Chinese government to accept Malaysia's exports of the 'king of fruits' had also changed the situation where the smell of the durians was no longer questioned but accepted as a fruit to be eaten by everyone.

"In my opinion, the export of durians to China and the other countries would result in positive economic benefits to those who plant the trees," he said when commenting on the impact of the Malaysian durian exports to China since last July.

Speaking to reporters when met after a durian feast with the international media and representatives of the foreign governments at the Kompleks Kraf, here today he said the perception on and smell of the fruit among the foreigners had changed and they had also acknowledged that the durian was the 'king of fruits' and should be eaten by everyone.

"Durian to us is something that can boost friendly and diplomatic ties," he said.

The idea of exporting the durian to China was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak during his official visit to that country in June 2009 by bringing the fruits from this country to be sampled by top Chinese officials including Prime Minister Wen Jiabao.

Attracted by its taste, the Chinese government had officially given permission to Malaysia to export durians to that country in May 2011.

On the durian feast, Rais said it was being held to boost relations between the foreign media and the ministry including the agencies under the ministry as well as between the staff.

The feast was organised by the Ministry of Information Communication and Culture together with the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama), the Information Department and the National Heritage Department.

Also present were Deputy Information Communication and Culture Minister Datuk Joseph Salang Gandum, Secretary-General of the Ministry Datuk Seri Kamaruddin Siaraf, Bernama General Manager Datuk Hasnul Hassan and Bernama Editor-in-Chief Datuk Yong Soo Heong.

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Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/newsindex.php?id=640997>

