

Call For Malaysia, Indonesia To Jointly Develop Common Border Areas
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KOTA KINABALU, Oct 14 (Bernama) -- A proposal has been made for the Malaysian and Indonesian governments to jointly develop areas along their common border between Sabah and Sarawak and Kalimantan encompassing the economic, social and educational aspects.

The suggestion was raised at a dialogue on the common border here Tuesday night by Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) editor-in-chief Datuk Zakaria Abdul Wahab.

He said the initiative could develop into a comprehensive platform for the resolution of common border issues.

Zakaria said he believed that the approach could improve cooperation between Malaysia and Indonesia in fostering harmony among the people living along their common border.

Citing the joint development undertaken by Malaysia and Thailand along their common border, he said the initiative seemed to have borne fruit in that there was almost no border issues.

"Both sides jointly developed the areas along the common border, focusing on the agricultural and economic aspects," he said as a panelist at the dialogue.

Zakaria said Malaysia and Indonesia should consider the potential of establishing free trade zones at points along the 2,109-km Sabah/Sarawak-Kalimantan common border to boost the economy of the local people.

"Free trade zones have been set up in Padang Besar, Bukit Kayu Hitam and Rantau Panjang along the Malaysia-Thailand border and the local people are allowed to cross the border without the use of passports for the purpose of trading and purchasing of goods," he said.

Zakaria said that to avoid the sale of Malaysian-subsidised controlled items in Indonesia, Malaysia could impose duty on these goods because subsidised goods were meant only for people in Malaysia.

He also suggested that industrial zones be established to facilitate the movement of the local people to get to work across the border and return by the end of the day, as was the case in Johor Bahru and Singapore.

As for education, he said, the Malaysian and Indonesian governments could build schools along the common border to enable the local people enjoy formal education.

Zakaria also said that health and medical facilities could be provided in the border areas, whereby doctors from Malaysia and Indonesia could attend to patients regardless of their

nationality.

The two-day dialogue, an initiative of the Malaysia-Indonesia Journalists Friendship Alliance (Iswami), was attended by over 40 journalists from the two countries, and is aimed at enhancing understanding and bilateral ties.

Also on the panel was Iswami Indonesia president and Antara News Agency managing director Saiful Hadi.

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