

KL, Riyadh, Need To Respond To Challenges Facing Muslims Together
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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 26 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, as active members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, have been urged to jointly seek ways to address a host of challenges blighting the Muslim world.

The call was made by Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Muhammad V in his address at the state banquet in honour of the visiting King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia here, Sunday night.

The event at Istana Negara or National Palace was part of Day 1 of King Salman's itinerary as he embarked on a four-day state visit to Malaysia, his first since ascending the throne on Jan 23, 2015.

In welcoming the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and his entourage to Malaysia, Sultan Muhammad V noted that Kuala Lumpur and Riyadh were on the same page over the need to find solutions to issues affecting the ummah.

"In this aspect, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, as active members of the OIC need to cooperate in resolving issues facing the Muslims," he added.

Present at the banquet were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, and his deputy, Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi. Also present was former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Sultan Muhammad V hopes the historic visit of King Salman Abdulaziz will further enhance cooperation in economic and trade based on mutual trust and respect between the two countries.

"We are very pleased to see the commitment of both countries to enhance trade relations. Your Majesty's (King Salman Abdulaziz) government is among Malaysia's largest trading partners in the Middle East."

Sultan Muhammad V pointed out that that total trade between Malaysia and Saudi Arabia in 2016 rose by 12.4 percent to US\$3.17 billion from US\$2.82 billion in 2015.

He said despite these positive developments, there were still many economic opportunities

and benefits which could be explored by the two governments.

The presence of a large trade delegation during the visit of King Salman Abdulaziz reflects the ongoing efforts of the Saudi Arabian government in promoting greater economic cooperation between the two countries.

Sultan Muhammad V said the role of King Salman Abdulaziz as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques is of great significance to the entire Muslim world.

Millions of Malaysians who visited the holy land praised the efforts undertaken by the Saudi government led by King Salman Abdulaziz to provide more comfort to the pilgrims.

"I am very grateful to hear the good news that Your Majesty has agreed to raise the quota for Malaysian haj pilgrims this year," said Sultan Muhammad V. Tabung Haji (TH) last month said that Malaysia's quota for haj pilgrims has been raised to 27,900 people this year compared to 22,230 previously.

Recalling the history of friendship between both countries, Sultan Muhammad V said Saudi Arabia sent representatives for the declaration of Malaysia's independence on August 31, 1957.

"Indeed, since 60 years ago, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia have enjoyed a close relationship which is based on trust and unity."

Sultan Muhammad V described the visit of King Salman Abdulaziz as very important in further enhancing ties between the two countries.

"I also plan to reciprocate by making a visit to Saudi Arabia," he added.

King Salman Abdulaziz was given a state welcome at Dataran Parlimen this morning.

Earlier, he arrived on a special flight at KL International Airport (KLIA) and was met on arrival by Najib.

King Salman Abdulaziz and Najib are scheduled to meet in Putrajaya tomorrow.

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