

At the Summit Meeting Between Malaysia and S.Korea:

Pres. Roh and PM Dato Seri Abdullah Agreed to Boost Economic Exchanges and Enhance Bilateral Cooperation

In their Summit Meeting on Aug. 23, 2004, at Cheong Wa Dae in Seoul, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun and Malaysian Prime Minister Dato Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi agreed to boost economic exchanges and enhance bilateral cooperation in other areas.

The two leaders also promised to cooperate closely on issues concerning North Korea while concurring on the need for the international community to engage and assist the isolationist country. Roh called for an enhanced role for Malaysia in peacefully resolving the lingering impasse over North Korea's bid to develop nuclear weapons.

The two leaders agreed that the two countries should enhance cooperation within the framework of the ASEAN Plus Three (the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, South Korea, China and Japan). Korea and the ASEAN will adopt a declaration on their "comprehensive cooperative partnership" this year to mark the 15th anniversary of establishing dialogue between the two sides. Korea is Malaysia's seventh-largest trading partner while Malaysia is Korea's 11th.

"The two leaders concurred that a free trade pact will help with both nations. They agreed to push for it by keeping pace with the current talks for establishment of the trade accord between Korea and ASEAN member nations," said presidential spokesman Kim Jong-min.

According to the presidential spokesman, Prime Minister Dato Seri Abdullah proposed a free trade agreement between the two countries. Roh said that he would review the proposal. The two leaders also focused on the means to expand bilateral trade and investment, mainly in the energy and information technology (IT) industries.

During the Summit Meeting, Roh explained that Korea's decision to send an additional contingent to Iraq is purely a bid to help rehabilitate the war-devastated Middle Eastern nation without any hostile intentions.

"The Malaysian Prime Minister expressed full understanding of Korea's decision to dispatch troops," said a Chong Wa Dae official. With 3,600 troops in Iraq, Korea is the third largest coalition partner in the nation, following the United States and Britain in terms of force size.

"I understand South Korea's decision to send troops to Iraq," Dato Seri Abdullah said in a press conference held at Lotte Hotel in downtown Seoul. The Malaysian Prime Minister, who came here on August 21, 2004 for the first time after taking office last October, said his country hopes Seoul's troop deployment will contribute to help stabilize Iraq.

However, Dato Seri Abdullah, who chairs the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), said that some Islamic countries and Iraqi people are still critical of the United States-led coalition forces in Iraq. "The continued presence (of the U.S.-led multinational forces) in Iraq is

troops to Iraq, the top Malaysian official said, "He is waiting for responses from other Islamic countries. Some of the countries, including Saudi Arabia, suggested the withdrawal of occupation forces as a condition for an OIC troop dispatch.

"Dato Seri Abdullah arrived in South Korea on Sunday for a three-day visit, the first since he took office in October. Roh invited him to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral ties. During the summit, the Malaysian Prime Minister invited Roh to visit his country and Roh agreed.

During his stay in Seoul, the Malaysian leader met with a group of business leaders, calling on them to increase investment in the Southeast Asian nation. He also attended a business forum on economic relations between Korea and Malaysia.