

Iran keen on petrochemical JVs with Brunei

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Vital to develop petrochemical, oil refining sectors for long-term growth: Iran Ambassador

IRAN is ready to cooperate with Brunei Darussalam in the development of the petrochemical industry to provide a solid base for sustainable progress of the country, Iran's Ambassador to Brunei His Excellency Abolfazl Khazaei said.

"Brunei's economy is strong as the country is rich in oil resources but no country can rely on the exports of crude petroleum in this era of extreme global competition," the Ambassador of the world's fourth-leading oil producer said in an exclusive interview with The Brunei Times on the eve of Iran's National Day which is being celebrated today.

Petrochemicals are chemical products made from raw materials of petroleum origin that can be used as solvents, detergents or adhesives as well as plastic, fibres and certain kinds of lubricants.

"We have 100 years of experience in managing the oil industry and we are already developing and exporting petrochemicals so Brunei can benefit a lot from our experience.

"We are also ready for joint ventures (JVs) with Brunei in this area" he said adding that there was a great potential for the cooperation between both oil producing Muslim countries.

Iran exported petrochemical products worth US\$3 billion (\$4.25 billion) last year and also launched the world's biggest factory for aromatics (a petrochemical raw material), in a bid to further expand the oil industry.

According to official data, Brunei's total exports of crude oil, natural gas and refined products during 2006 were US\$7.2 billion.

Crude and refined petroleum products account for 80 per cent of Iran's US\$76.5 billion exports.

The Ambassador was of the view that energy-intensive industries like petrochemicals and oil refining are imperative for an oil-producing country for long term development.

Abolfazl Khazaei, a career diplomat who had served as Iran's Ambassador to New Zealand and Georgia, stressed the need for further improvement in bilateral relations between Brunei and Iran, which established diplomatic relations in 1993.

"Brunei and Iran have a lot in common. Both are Islamic countries and Asian states so the two countries should expand the areas of their cooperation," he said.

He also said Iran was planning to set up its stall at Bridex 2009, Brunei's second international defence exhibition.

"We have developed the state of the art defence technology and would like to share our experience with Brunei in this area as well."

He said the two Muslim countries also have potential for cooperation in the areas of education, tourism, culture and halal food industry.

The two countries can also cooperate with one another in the Organisation of Islamic Countries, he said.

He informed that Brunei's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade-II Pehin Orang Kaya Pekerma Dewa Dato Seri Paduka Lim Jock Seng will visit Iran on February 21.

The Ambassador hoped that the visit of the Minister will open avenues for further expanding cooperation between the two countries.

When asked about the significance of February 11 for Iran, he said: "Iran became a sovereign state and got full independence as a result of Islamic revolution of 1979. That is why we celebrate the 11th of February — the day of victory of revolution — as our national day," he said.

Source: The Brunei Times