Halimah: Vital to upkeep Singapore-Indonesia ties

Fast-growing Indonesian economy presents opportunities for collaboration, she says

Hariz Baharudin
In Yogyakarta

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Indonesia’s swiftly growing economy presents tremendous opportunities for collaboration, she says. This presents tremendous opportunities for our industries and the digital economy. This presents tremendous opportunities for our businesses in the area of IT infrastructure, data services, fintech and artificial intelligence," she said.

Indonesia’s swift economic growth is the largest and fastest-growing in the region, on track to cross the US$230 billion ($310 billion) mark by 2025, according to a report last October by Google, Temasek and global business consultants Bain & Company.

Trade and investment ties between Singapore and Indonesia are close, with total trade amounting to $65 billion in 2018, a 5.4 per cent rise over the previous year.

Indonesia’s top foreign investor for the past six years.

One such collaboration bearing fruit is the 2.700ha Kendal Industrial Park – a joint venture between Singapore’s Sembcorp Development and Indonesia’s industrial estate developer Jababeka – which officially opened in 2016. It has since attracted investments valued at US$843 million and will create more than 8,000 jobs, which Madam Halimah said yesterday was a "very significant" figure.

She added that she had good, substantive discussions with President Joko Widodo and other Indonesian leaders, and they noted that bilateral ties were excellent. The relationship is also broad and multifaceted, covering areas from the economy to security and culture.

A key priority area for Indonesia and Mr Joko is human resource development, a field in which Singapore has already been helping its neighbor, said Madam Halimah.

She noted that Singapore and Indonesia had signed more than 20 agreements to conduct training programmes to help thousands of Indonesian officials and trainers scale up and better meet the demands of an ever-changing digital economy.

During her state visit, Madam Halimah met Mr Joko in Bogor and they witnessed the signing of an updated avoidance of double tax agreement.

In Jakarta, she met Vice-President Ma’ruf Amin, Indonesian religious and interfaith leaders, businessmen as well as Singaporeans living in Indonesia. She also visited a humanitarians project started by the Singapore International Foundation.

In Yogyakarta, she met and was hosted to dinner by Governor Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, and they discussed ways to further strengthen cooperation, especially in areas such as smart cities development, cultural cooperation, entrepreneurship, and exchanges between universities.

Madam Halimah also had a dialogue with Gadja Mada University students and visited BLOC71 Yogyakarta, a start-up incubation community established by NUS Enterprise in partnership with Indonesia’s Sallim Group.

She said she was happy to see people-to-people collaborations between organisations of both countries, and called for more platforms for their people to have conversations, as this would reflect a strong shared commitment for peace, growth and prosperity.

She added that by leveraging each other’s strengths and capabilities, “we can grow faster together, to benefit both our countries”.

President Halimah returned to Singapore yesterday.

harizbah@sph.com.sg