

27 DEC 1996
Abdullah-Mission
ABDULLAH IN LIMA ON A "MISSION POSSIBLE"

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 27 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had a busy schedule after his arrival in Lima at about 1.30am yesterday (2.30pm Malaysian time), following a flight that took almost 30 hours, including stopovers, from Kuala Lumpur.

However, the jet lag would not deter him from accomplishing his "special mission" to secure the safe and early release of Malaysian ambassador Ahmad Mokhtar Selat, who is among 103 hostages still being held by Marxist rebels at the Japanese ambassador's residence in the Peruvian capital.

On Dec 17, the rebels from the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) stormed the Japanese ambassador's residence and seized more than 500 guests attending a reception to mark the Japanese Emperor's birthday.

Abdullah's first task was to get a first-hand briefing on the situation from Malaysian ambassador to Brazil Datuk Zainal Abidin Zain, who is in temporary charge of the embassy in Peru.

The briefing took place at the Malaysian embassy amid the busy atmosphere there, with the telephones ringing incessantly, mostly from Malaysian journalists in Kuala Lumpur enquiring about the latest developments on the hostage crisis.

"I don't even have a place to sit," Abdullah told Bernama over the telephone from the embassy on his talks with Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori at 1.45pm local time (2.45am Malaysian time) today.

Halfway through the conversation, another telephone rang and Abdullah had to rush to take that call.

"As you can hear, I am quite busy but let me just tell you what took place today," he said as the telephones kept ringing.

Abdullah said he would be in Lima for "a day or two or more depending on the situation".

"I am not in a rush to come home. We have more important things to do here," he said referring to his "special mission".

Abdullah cut short his holiday in Singapore and left for Peru on Wednesday morning on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's instruction.

The instruction came just a day after the rebels released 225 hostages, the biggest batch freed so far. Ahmad Mokhtar was not among those released.

For Abdullah, this trip is unlike other official journeys overseas for he would likely have to use all his diplomatic experience and contacts to accomplish his mission. -- BERNAMA

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