

30 DEC 1996

Abdullah-Fujimori

ABDULLAH MEETS PERUVIAN PRESIDENT TO SAY "THANK YOU"

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 30 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi met President Alberto Fujimori in Lima today to express Malaysia's appreciation to the Peruvian government for securing the release of its ambassador, Ahmad Mokhtar Selat.

He said that on behalf of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the people and the government, he thanked Fujimori for his government's intervention in securing Ahmad Mokhtar's early release.

"We are grateful to him and the Peruvian government," he told Bernama when contacted in Lima after calling on the Peruvian leader at the presidential palace.

Ahmad Mokhtar was among the latest group of 20 hostages freed yesterday by the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement guerillas who seized the Japanese ambassador's residence and took captive hundreds of people attending a reception on Dec 17.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir told reporters in Shah Alam that he was happy with the release of Ahmad Mokhtar and felt that the Peruvian government had "done very well".

Abdullah said he told Fujimori that Malaysia remained concerned over the safety of the remaining 83 hostages, who according to Abdullah, were mainly Peruvian leaders.

"It is sad that so many still remain (as hostages)," Abdullah said, adding that he was however confident that the Peruvian government would be able to resolve the crisis peacefully.

He said Kuala Lumpur remained supportive of any peaceful efforts by the Peruvian government to resolve the crisis.

Abdullah also met Education Minister Domingo Palermo, the Peruvian government's chief negotiator with the leftist guerillas, today to express the government's appreciation for his help in securing Ahmad Mokhtar's early release.

Abdullah arrived in Lima on Thursday on a special mission at the instruction of Dr Mahathir to secure the early and safe release of Ahmad Mokhtar.

He had left Lima for Mexico City when the announcement on Ahmad Mokhtar's came five hours later, and he took the next plane back to the Peruvian capital.

Abdullah and Ahmad Mokhtar are scheduled to arrive here on at 12.45pm Wednesday. -- BERNAMA

ES JK