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Abdullah-Taiwan

MEETING WITH TAIWANESE MINISTER PERSONAL IN NATURE, SAYS ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 13 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today his meeting here with the Taiwanese Foreign Minister last week was personal and not official and would not affect Malaysia's commitment to the "One China" policy.

He said Malaysia would continue with the One China policy which only recognised the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the legitimate government for the whole of China including Taiwan but at the same time continued the existing economic and trade relations between Kuala Lumpur and Taipeh.

"Malaysia practises the One China policy and has no intention at any time to review the policy...we are firm on the One China stand but our relationship with Taiwan is one of trade and investment and Taiwan has had economic relations with us for a long time," he said.

He told reporters this after meeting Vietnamese National Assembly President Nong Duc Manh at Wisma Putra, here.

He was asked to comment on a foreign agency report last week which stated that Taiwanese Foreign Minister John Chang had visited Malaysia and held secret talks with Abdullah.

The report said Chang's two-day unannounced visit was part of Taipeh's efforts to break the diplomatic isolation by the international community.

Abdullah said Taiwan was one of the four countries with the most active trade and investment relations with Malaysia and was sometimes the biggest investor in Malaysia.

"So we cannot ignore Taiwan which plays an active role in trade and investment in this country.

"So whatever contact with its leaders is made on an unofficial and personal basis. It cannot and should not be regarded as affecting our relations with the PRC or as an intention to change the One China policy." he said.

According to the latest statistics, Taiwanese investments in Malaysia last year ranked second, after Japan, at RM1.44 bilion or 19.56 per cent of the total foreign investments in the country.

In 1990 and 1994, Taiwan was the biggest investor in Malaysia with approved investments worth RM6.33 bilion and RM2.87 bilion respectively. There are now about 900 Taiwanese companies operating in Malaysia.

Referring to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's recent statement that Malaysia stands firm on the One China policy, Abdullah said he hoped that with this commitment, the PRC would clearly understand and accept Malaysia's stand on the issue.

He said Malaysia had excellent relations with China and both countries could be regarded as friends and as such, Beijing would understand Malaysia's stand on Taiwan.

Malaysia is the first Asean country to establish diplomatic relations with China following former prime minister, the late Tun Abdul Razak's visit to Beijing on May 31, 1974.

Kuala Lumpur broke diplomatic ties with Taipeh the same year when it recognised the PRC under the One China policy.

The Taipeh Economic and Cultural Centre here manages all the economic affairs between Malaysia and Taiwan. -- BERNAMA

RV JK