

23 JUN 1996

Abdullah-Iran

M'SIA HOPES SHIITE ISSUE NOT DELAYING JOINT VENTURES IN IRAN

KEPALA BATAS, June 23 (Bernama) -- Malaysia does not know what is holding up the implementation of joint venture projects between Malaysian and Iranian entrepreneurs but hopes it has nothing to do with the Shiite issue, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

Malaysia's stand against Shiite teachings was an internal matter which should not affect its existing good ties with Iran, he told reporters after opening the Bertam Umno Branch meeting here.

"I am not sure what problems the Malaysian entrepreneurs are actually facing and I will raise the matter at the Malaysia-Iran Joint Commission meeting to be held this year," he said.

He was commenting on the delays in implementing joint venture projects under the memorandums of understanding (MOUs) signed by Malaysian and Iranian entrepreneurs after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to Iran in April 1993.

Among the projects that have yet to get off the ground is the joint hotel development involving Ekran Berhad and the Qeshm Free Trade Area Authority (QFTAA) on Qeshm islands.

A diplomat in Iran was reported as saying that bureaucratic red tape in Iran was causing delays and problems to Malaysian entrepreneurs with interests there.

Abdullah said he would get more information from the affected entrepreneurs, the Malaysian Malay Chamber of Commerce and International Trade and Industry Ministry.

On the presidential election to be held in the Republic of Srpska, Abdullah urged the Serb Democratic Party to drop its nomination of Radovan Karadzic to contest the polls.

He said the Serbs would be courting trouble and complicating matters if they insisted on fielding Karadzic.

"They must understand that the Dayton Peace Agreement clear states that anyone accused in the International Court as a war criminal cannot take part in the election," he said. -- BERNAMA

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