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Cuba keen to set up embassy in KL, says Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Cuba has expressed interest to set up its embassy here, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said Malaysia welcomed Cuba's intention which would augur well in enhancing ties between both countries.

The matter was conveyed to Abdullah by his Cuban counterpart Roberto Robaina Gonzalez when both leaders held a bilateral meeting at Wisma Putra. Robaina is on a five-day official visit to Malaysia.

At present Cuba's Ambassador to Laos is also accredited to Malaysia while Malaysia's dealings with Cuba were handled by its mission in the United States.

On whether Malaysia would also establish its mission in Havana, Abdullah said that would eventually take place whenever political and economic relations between two countries were expanded.

"However, this cannot be decided at my Ministry's level. If the Government decides to open up an embassy in Cuba, we will provide the officials."

On the meeting, Abdullah said Cuba was interested to learn more about Malaysia's experience and success in various fields especially rural development, land settlement schemes and poverty eradication programmes.

"I told him of Malaysia's willingness to share its knowledge. One of them is on land schemes like FELDA which have managed to provide land for the people as well as lift their standard of living through various economic programmes."

He added Cuba could also benefit from Malaysia's success in oil palm cultivation.

Abdullah said Robaina had also conveyed an invitation from president Fidel Castro for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to visit Cuba.

Earlier, at a separate function, Abdullah signed on behalf of Asean an amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding for the Asean-Canada Fisheries Post-Harvest Technology Project-Phase II.

Canadian High Commissioner Andre S. Simard signed on behalf of his country.

The amendment is necessary as some of the on-going projects implemented under the MoU, scheduled to be concluded by the end of last month, will be prolonged until the end of the year.

The extension is made not only to facilitate the conclusion of the on-going projects but also to include Vietnam as a participant and a new member of Asean.

The fisheries project, among others, is to improve the quality of fish and fish products; strengthen fish inspection services within the Asean countries; assist in the development and promotion of improved technology in fish processing, preservation and packaging; and to enhance the transfer of appropriate technology to the fish processing industry in the region.

Abdullah said three regional centres had been created as a result of the project. They are the regional centre for fish inspection and quality control based in Jakarta, Indonesia; regional centre for fish processing technology in Singapore; and regional centre for information preparation and dissemination in Kuala Lumpur.

He said 11 activities relating to fish inspection and technology were

conducted in the pilot project countries and regional centres.  
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