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## Fujimori hopes close ties stay despite incident

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PRESIDENT Alberto Fujimori hopes Malaysia will maintain close ties with Peru despite the hostage incident involving Malaysian Ambassador Ahmad Mokhtar Selat, who was held hostage for 11 days since December 17.

Fujimori has conveyed this during his meeting with Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in Lima on December 27, a day before Ahmad Mokhtar was released by the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA).

Abdullah, who was in Peru since December 26 to convey Malaysia's hope for the release of Ahmad Mokhtar, said he had conveyed Fujimori's message to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"I have presented a report to the Prime Minister on my meeting with Fujimori who had expressed for continue bilateral relationship between the two countries," he told reporters after accompanying Ahmad Mokhtar to a one-hour meeting with Dr Mahathir.

Apart from that, Abdullah said he had also discussed with the Prime Minister the need to step up security in Malaysian embassies abroad.

"We will submit a report on recommendations to step up security at the embassies to the Prime Minister soon," he added.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Mokhtar thanked the Government for the support leading to his release from MRTA in Peru.

"I just came to say thank you to the Prime Minister," he said, adding the Prime Minister has not given any advice to him although the meeting lasted for one hour.

To this, Abdullah said the meeting took a longer period because he also presented his report on his meeting with Fujimori and the Prime Minister has to meet several other people.

Apart from Abdullah and Mokhtar, accompanying them were Malaysian Ambassador to Brazil Datuk Zainal Abidin Zain and Foreign Ministry secretary-general Datuk Kadir Mohamed.

Ahmad Mokhtar was asked whether the Prime Minister had given any advice to him and the topic of discussions during the meeting.

"No, he did not say anything," he said.

It was learnt that Ahmad Mokhtar had also related to the Prime Minister his ordeal during the hostage incident in Lima.

The Malaysian ambassador was one of the over 400 foreign diplomats and government officials who were held hostage by the terrorists who stormed the Japanese ambassador's residence on December 17. He was released along with 20 other hostages on December 28 and returned to Malaysia on Wednesday.

On when he would return back to work in Peru, Ahmad Mokhtar said he is taking a rest first.

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