

15 JAN 1997

Abdullah-Asean

MALAYSIA AYE TO ANNUAL ASEAN-JAPAN SUMMIT

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 15 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has agreed in principle to the proposal by Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto that Japan and Asean hold annual summits, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said tonight.

However the structure and frequency of the summit merited further consideration, he said.

The principle behind holding such a summit had been accepted and in fact there had been meetings at Foreign Ministers level between Asean and Japan over the last three years, he said referring to the Asean Post-Ministerial Conference.

Abdullah said Prime Minister Hashimoto had made the proposal for the annual Asean-Japan summit during his talks with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he visited Kuala Lumpur recently.

Abdullah was commenting on Hashimoto's policy address in Singapore yesterday that five of the seven Asean countries he visited recently had agreed in principle to the proposal.

Hashimoto, who visited Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and Vietnam before arriving in Singapore was reported to have said that dialogue at top level between Japan and Asean should be expanded to strengthen mutual trust between leaders of both sides.

Abdullah said even though Japan and Asean had had dialogues at ministerial level earlier, the proposal by Prime Minister Hashimoto involved heads of government with a specific agenda and this merited consideration.

Asked whether the Japanese Prime Minister's proposal was an indication that Japan was receptive to the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC), Abdullah said dialogue between Asean and China, Japan and South Korea had been going on under the "Seven Plus Three" concept at Foreign Ministers level.

"Our experience during this dialogue has been good as all discussions have been useful and there has been no enmity against anyone," he said.

On Malaysia's proposal to invite China, Japan and South Korea to the second Asean Unofficial Summit here this year, Abdullah said it was indeed Malaysia's plan to invite these countries in conjunction with Asean's 30th anniversary.

"However we have to discuss this with our Asean colleagues. In Wisma Putra's view it is appropriate to invite them as this will be an anniversary summit and not the usual summit," he added. -- BERNAMA

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