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Malaysia welcomes accord between Israel and Palestine

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Malaysia today welcomed the landmark deal between Israel and Palestine which will extend Palestinian rule to the West Bank city of Hebron and beyond.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he did not have the details of the accord but expressed hope that it would further help the peace process between the two parties.

"I do not have the details of the agreement but it has come to my attention that a deal has been made."

Abdullah said this when speaking to reporters after launching an exhibition on an exclusive collection of Persian carpets.

On Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's suggestion for annual Japan-Asean summits, which he made at a lecture in Singapore, Abdullah said Malaysia in principle agreed to the idea.

He said Hashimoto had first made the suggestion to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during his visit to Malaysia.

"Our Prime Minister said Malaysia was willing to consider the matter."

In the lecture on Tuesday, Hashimoto said Japan and Asean should reform their co-operative relationship in a manner suitable to the new era.

Hashimoto said his proposal for annual Japan-Asean summits was backed by Dr Mahathir, Brunei's Sultan Hassanah Bolkuah, Indonesian President Suharto, Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet and Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

"In order to promote Japanese-Asean co-operation, strong political leadership is indispensable. Dialogues at top levels should be enhanced," Hashimoto said at the lecture.

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