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Abdullah-Japan

M'SIA AND JAPAN AGREE ON NEED FOR UN REFORMS

By: Syed Jamil Jaafar

TOKYO, March 25 (Bernama) -- Japan has welcomed the initiative of the United Nations General Assembly president, Tan Sri Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for reforms at the world body, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said Japan and Malaysia were on common ground on the need to make the UN more democratic and transparent instead of subjecting it to the domination of one country.

Speaking to Malaysian journalists after talks with his Japanese counterpart Yukihiko Ikeda, Abdullah said Japan shared Malaysia's view that discussions on Razali's proposal should continue.

"We must not allow it to be derailed by one country on account of its own limited interests," he said.

Abdullah did not name the country but it was apparent that he was referring to the United States and its veto power.

Razali has come up with a paper, proposing among other things, a review of the veto power of the five permanent members of the security council, expansion of the security council membership and a review of the linkage between the council and the general assembly.

Malaysia, which has been very critical of the existing UN system, has already expressed support for the initiative.

Abdullah and Ikeda held wide-ranging talks today ahead of tomorrow's official meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his counterpart, Ryutaro Hashimoto.

Apart from discussing bilateral matters and the UN, the two ministers updated each other on Asean, Myanmar and the Korean peninsula situation.

Abdullah said Japan was keenly awaiting Asean's response to its proposal for a head of government level seven-plus-one (the seven Asean member countries and Japan) meeting.

"This will be discussed by the Asean foreign ministers at the earliest opportunity," he said.

Asean and Japan already have a seven-plus-one meeting at ministerial level as part of the Asean Ministerial Meeting (AMM) post-meeting conference (PMC).

On Myanmar, Abdullah said Ikeda informed him that Japan left it to Asean to decide on accepting that country into its fold but hoped that membership in Asean would not give the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) legitimacy to suppress the opposition.

Abdullah said Malaysia-Japan ties had matured into a new relationship in which the two countries now regarded each other as partners and no longer as aid recipient and aid donor.

"We have reached a stage where we are talking about us having joint ventures in third countries," he said.

As Malaysia progressed and became more affluent, the country was becoming more and more important to Japan as a market for more expensive products, he added. -- BERNAMA

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