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G15-Indonesia

SUHARTO THANKS MALAYSIA FOR ASSISTANCE

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 3 (Bernama) -- President Suharto today thanked Malaysia for its assistance to put out forest fires in Indonesia and the pledge of financial aid to ease the financial crisis in the republic.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Suharto conveyed his gratitude to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during their bilateral meeting here today.

" He (Suharto) took the opportunity at the meeting to express his appreciation for Malaysia's support and cooperation to tackle the forest fires," he told reporters.

Malaysia sent more than 1,000 firemen to Kalimantan and Sumatera last month to help the Indonesian authorities to douse the forest fires which caused the haze to envelope several countries in this region.

Abdullah said Suharto gave an assurance that Indonesia would continue with its efforts to put out the fires and accept assistance extended by other countries.

He said Suharto also conveyed his appreciation for the spirit of camaraderie shown by Malaysia with a pledge of US\$1 billion to help rejuvenate the republic's economy which suffered a severe blow due to the financial crisis.

He also thanked Malaysia for hosting the seventh G15 summit, which was originally scheduled to be hosted by Indonesia but was unable to do so due to certain reasons, he said.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir, on his part, thanked Suharto and other G15 leaders for their good response to the summit which began today.

Meanwhile, Indonesia's National Secretariat Minister Moerdiono said Suharto and Dr Mahathir also agreed to step up exchange of information between Malaysia and Indonesia in the wake of recent events involving the two countries.

" They agreed to have exchange programmes in all sectors between government departments of the two countries," he told reporters after the meeting of G15 heads of government.

Moerdiono said the two leaders did not touch on other issues during their brief meeting.

Asked on the financial package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to shore up the country's economy, he said it would be used only if it was really necessary.

The package is estimated between US\$30 billion and US\$40 billion. --

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