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Abdullah: Malaysia poised to get seat in UN Security Council

Syed Nadzri in Durban

MALAYSIA looks set to get a seat in the United Nations Security Council next month following pledges of support it is receiving during the ongoing Non-Aligned Movement summit.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Malaysia was already the "endorsed Asian candidate" to replace Japan whose term expires soon.

The pledges, made in bilateral and informal meetings on the sidelines of the summit between Malaysian officials and their counterparts from other countries, have practically put the country in a pole position for one of the 10 seats as a non-permanent member.

The Security Council has five permanent members - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia - while the present non-permanent members are Bahrain, Brazil, Costa Rica, Gabon, Gambia, Japan, Kenya, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden.

The non-permanent members are each chosen for a two-year term according to the continent they come from.

If Malaysia succeeds, it will be the third time for the country, the last time being in 1990. Malaysia was first elected to the UN Security Council in 1965 for a split two-year term alongside the then Czechoslovakia.

Abdullah is having a busy time in his many bilateral meetings held so far answering questions about the current situation in Malaysia and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Foreign Minister said there were always expressions of concern from his counterparts about the economic problems faced by Malaysia.

Questions about Dr Mahathir's absence from the summit, he added, were also unending.

"I told them that our Prime Minister has expressed his regret in not being able to attend the summit as he had to stay back in Malaysia to look into important domestic affairs," he said.

Abdullah said the delegates whom he had met all looked up to Malaysia and said they were confident that the country would get over its problems soon.

One of the bilateral meetings held yesterday was with Japanese Foreign Minister Hishashi Owada who conveyed his country's support for the appointment of Tan Sri Razali Ismail as a UN special envoy to look into the domestic problems in Myanmar.

Discussions with Owada, Abdullah said, also centred on Cambodia which does not look politically stable despite completing its recent national elections.

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