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Asean-Abdullah

CAMBODIA EXPECTED TO JOIN ASEAN BY YEAR END

By: E Sivabalan

HANOI, Dec 15 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi hinted today that Cambodia will be admitted into Asean by end of the month at a special ceremony here.

"It will be a New Year gift (for Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen)," he said when briefing Malaysian journalists on the Sixth Asean Summit which opened here today.

Earlier, Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai announced that the Asean leaders have decided to admit Cambodia as the grouping's 10th member.

Khai said they have instructed their foreign ministers to organise a special admission ceremony in the Vietnamese capital.

When asked if Cambodia would be admitted here tomorrow at the end of the two-day summit, Abdullah said it was unlikely as it would be too late to make the preparations.

He said it was up to Singapore Foreign Minister S.Jayakumar, as Chairman of the Asean Standing Committee, to decide when to hold the ceremony.

"We hope that the ceremony will be held as soon as possible," Abdullah said.

Abdullah said now that the Asean leaders have agreed to admit Cambodia in Hanoi, there should be no more problems.

"We don't have to delay the matter further," he said.

On today's summit meeting, Abdullah said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad brought to the attention of the leaders the different land laws and land administration in each member state.

Abdullah said Asean member states may standardise aspects relating to their land laws to further facilitate investments.

He said today's wide-ranging discussions among the leaders on economic and financial matters, among other things, were directed at enhancing cooperation and unity in Asean.

"The Asean leaders displayed excellent understanding among themselves and did not let differences stand in the way of of their discourse," Abdullah added.

-- BERNAMA

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