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Abdullah-Decision

LEADERS EXPECTED TO DECIDE ON CAMBODIA TONIGHT

HANOI, Dec 14 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today Asean leaders are expected to make a decision on Cambodia's entry into the nine-member grouping tonight.

"Tonight is the leaders' informal dinner and I think it is the best time for them to discuss the matter," he told reporters, here, when asked when exactly the decision would be made.

Briefing Malaysian journalists on the outcome of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's separate meetings with his counterparts Hun Sen of Cambodia and Vietnam's Phan Van Kai, Abdullah said both discussions centred on Cambodia.

Hun Sen hoped that the issue of setting up the senate in Cambodia would not be used as an excuse to prevent his country from joining Asean, Abdullah said.

He said it was an internal administrative matter and it was not right to see that the Indochinese state did everything it was required to do before admitting it into Asean.

"What is important is that it already has an effective government," he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir and Khai were of the view that Cambodia's entry into Asean could bring benefits.

Abdullah said they also felt that economic cooperation needed to be stepped up among Asean members to help revive the economies in the region.

"They felt that it would be good to stress at this time that Asean is still united and able to think of what's best to make it a developed and more stable region," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MAM JK