

26 JAN 1998

Colombia-Support

COLOMBIA PLEDGES TO SUPPORT MALAYSIA'S UN BID

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 26 (Bernama) -- Colombia will support Malaysia's bid to gain one of the non-permanent seats of the United Nations' Security Council for 1999-2001, its Foreign Minister Dr Maria Emma Mejia Velez said today.

"We are sure that Malaysia can play a very important role as a non-permanent member of the Security Council," she said at a media conference after talks with her Malaysian counterpart, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, here.

She expressed the hope that, likewise, Malaysia would continue to give her country its full backing in the Latin American country's quest to become one of the members of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum after the lifting of a 10-year moratorium on membership which begins this year.

The admission of three new members of Apec -- Russia, Vietnam and Peru -- will take place at the grouping's sixth summit here in November.

The two ministers also exchanged views on the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) over the issue of UN reform particularly the Security Council. Colombia currently holds the presidency of NAM.

Dr Mejia, who is the minister representing Colombia's chairmanship of NAM, made it clear that NAM was of the view that the developing world must be represented in the Security Council if it was to be expanded.

On Colombia-Malaysia relations, she said her country would continue to expand bilateral trade which currently stands at about US\$39 million a year.

Colombian exports to Malaysia include fungicides, steel and machinery while Malaysia exports computers parts, palm oil and rubber products to Colombia.

She said Colombia would explore the possibility of exporting its wide range of coffee products to Malaysia in the future.

Dr Mejia also said with Malaysia's help, Colombia planned to increase the size of its oil palm plantation from 140,000 hectares to 200,000 hectares within the next five years.

On the current Asian economic and financial crisis, she expressed admiration on the will of all levels of Malaysians to overcome the country's setbacks.

"You'll do whatever solutions you'll find within the region...I think it will be a bit painful but you'll overcome the pain," she said.

Dr Mejia said the issue of using Malaysian and Colombian currencies in bilateral trade might be discussed at her meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow.

On Colombia's drug trade, she said the government had managed to eradicate 43,000 hectares of coca plantations this year with plans to eliminate 70,000 hectares more.

"We seem to be at least finding a way to solve the drug problem which is affecting so many young kids in many countries in the world through the activities of drug dealers from Colombia and other countries," she said.

Meanwhile, Abdullah said that they also discussed the possibility of having an agreement on the avoidance of double taxation to facilitate bilateral trade.

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