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APEC-NEWS-MAHATHIR

DR MAHATHIR EXPLAINS ANWAR'S ISSUE TO HOWARD

By: Muin Abdul Majid

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today explained the Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's issue to his Australian counterpart John Howard during their bilateral meeting here.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said Dr Mahathir gave a full explanation on the issue.

"Dr Mahathir explained to Howard the actual circumstances leading to the issue," she told reporters after the meeting, here.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Australia valued the bilateral relations between Kuala Lumpur and Canberra.

"Australia feels if Malaysia's economy is on a strong footing, it is also good for them," he said.

He said Australia wished to see a strong Malaysian economy and hoped that efforts by the Malaysian government to stimulate the economy would yield benefits to all.

On the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) issue raised by Howard, Abdullah said Malaysia still supported the FPDA, describing it as a meaningful defence cooperation.

He said Dr Mahathir explained that Malaysia did not participate in a recent military exercise under the auspices of the FPDA due to the economic downturn.

The FPDA comprises Australia, Britain, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore.

-- BERNAMA

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