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`Embassies were given materials to counter bad publicity'

WISMA Putra was in constant touch with Malaysian embassies during the peak of negative media reporting on the country following the dismissal of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister and the implementation of exchange rate controls.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday the embassies were given "fact sheets", newspaper reports, text of speeches by leaders and guidelines on how to tackle questions raised.

"We received newspaper reports and articles published by the overseas' media as well as requests for guidelines on how to react to certain reports," he said in a reply to Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar (BN-Batang Lupar).

On intrusion into Malaysian airspace by Singapore Air Force jets, Abdullah said the Government had no intention of holding further discussion with the republic on the matter.

"In the recent discussion between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Singaporean counterpart Goh Chok Tong, Dr Mahathir assured Singapore that Malaysia would give prompt go-ahead for the use of its airspace during search and rescue missions."

To a supplementary question by Wan Junaidi on whether it was necessary for the ministry to embark on an image-building exercise, Abdullah said:

"The task of image-building is an on-going exercise which requires concerted and well co-ordinated efforts; hence the need for us to forge close co-operation with other ministries and agencies."

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