

05/03/1998

Malaysia, US vow to help Indonesia overcome crisis

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MALAYSIA and the US yesterday pledged to continue to lend support to Indonesia to overcome economic difficulties.

The two countries recognised the importance of extending cooperation to Indonesia, especially to the republic's leaders, in helping them tackle the economic problems.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Stanley Roth reached this agreement during their hour-long meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

"Malaysia and the US will assist Indonesia in our own ways," he told reporters after the meeting.

He also briefed Roth on the frequent contacts between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Indonesian President Suharto as well as ministers of the two countries.

Roth is in Malaysia for a private visit where he also met Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. He had earlier accompanied US President Bill Clinton's special envoy, former US vice-president Walter Mondale, who was in Indonesia to convey to President Suharto of US concerns over the deteriorating situation in the republic.

Abdullah also said that Malaysia will cooperate with whoever is chosen by the Indonesian people to lead the country. President Suharto has been nominated for a seventh consecutive term, with Research and Technology Minister B J Habibie as his vice-presidential running mate.

Abdullah told Roth that Malaysia and Indonesia will continue to consult each other, and exchange views and information on a range of issues.

Roth was also informed of the Association of South-East Asian Nations' (Asean) determination to see the region maintain stability and peace.

"Asean know that this is important if it wants to see the region's economies, particularly those facing financial problems, recover," he added.

Both Abdullah and Roth also discussed the impending election in Cambodia which has been scheduled for July 26.

Abdullah expressed hope that the election, which was called for under the 1991 Paris Accord, will be conducted in a fair and democratic manner.

"Most importantly, it must be credible," he said.

He also said that a meeting will be held in Manila by "Friends of Cambodia" (the five permanent members of the Security Council and signatories of the Paris Peace Accord) including the three representatives from the Asean "troika", namely the foreign ministers of Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, to discuss the Cambodian situation.

Abdullah and Roth also discussed the situation in Myanmar, where Roth said that the US hopes to see changes in the country.

Abdullah explained to the American diplomat that Asean will continue its constructive engagement policy with Myanmar as it is already a member of Asean.

Bername reports: US President Bill Clinton has recognised the excellent bilateral cooperation and coordination between the US and Malaysia over the past year in combating international narcotics.

Clinton, in the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report issued to Congress on February 26, noted that the Malaysian Government has given high priority to the war against dadah, a statement from the US Embassy in

Kuala Lumpur said yesterday.

The President also noted that the two countries have conducted joint law enforcement and demand reduction training programmes that strengthened the effectiveness of bilateral and regional efforts to stem dadah trafficking and abuse, said the statement.

It said the report also described the effective bilateral cooperation between US and Malaysia law enforcement agencies in 1997.

The report stated that top Malaysian leaders including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad ... "have made combating dadah one of Malaysia's top priorities and that cooperation with the US on combating trafficking has been excellent."

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