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NAM-Malaysia

NON-ALIGNED NATIONS GIVES MALAYSIA THE THUMBS UP

By: E.Sivabalan

DURBAN, Sept 2 (Bernama) -- Non-aligned countries have expressed their confidence that Malaysia will recover from its economic doldrums based on its strong economic fundamentals and political stability, said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He said from the feedback he received from some of his counterparts during a series of meetings on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) foreign ministers meeting here, Malaysia was on the right path to a recovery.

"They are confident that we will pull through," he told Malaysian journalists at the end of the meeting ahead of the 12th NAM Summit which began here today.

Abdullah is representing Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the two-day summit which is set to discuss the currency crisis that has hit many Asian and African countries.

Heads of state and government from 114 member countries are attending the summit which was opened by South African President Nelson Mandela.

The Malaysian foreign minister said this was the views he gathered from his counterparts after a series of bilateral talks with them including from Pakistan, Ukraine, Yemen, and the Japanese special envoy.

Abdullah said during his talks with them, they expressed concern over the problems faced by Malaysia caused by currency speculators.

He said they also wanted to know if the reason for Dr Mahathir not being able to attend the Durban Summit was because there was "a big problem" in Malaysia.

Abdullah said he informed them that the prime minister had to concentrate on matters pertaining to the revival of the Malaysian economy.

"I told them that this was the utmost thing in his mind, the top priority and that measures are being taken to revive the economy and that is why he was unable to attend," he said.

He said they agreed that to achieve full recovery, what was important was for Malaysia to maintain its strong fundamentals and a strong political climate.

He also said that none of the non-aligned countries have objected to Malaysia's bid to secure a United Nations Security Council seat for the 1999/2000 period.

"They are giving us their support," he said.

On Cambodia, Abdullah said he hopes to meet his counterparts from Asean during the summit to discuss when Phnom Penh could be admitted into the regional grouping now that elections are over in Cambodia.

He said as of now, Cambodia could not be admitted into Asean yet because they have yet to form a government.

"How could we admit them when they have yet to form a government?" he said.

Abdullah said like Malaysia, Japan too wanted to see an end to the bickering between the two main factions in Cambodia so that a government could be formed.

He said that Japan also welcomed the appointment of Tan Sri Razali Ismail, Malaysia's former Permanent Representative to the United Nations, as the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to Myanmar.

On the final document of the NAM Summit, Abdullah said the document was almost finalised and would be forwarded to the heads of state and

government today for further deliberations.

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