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Serbs urged to end Kosovo violence

THE Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting held in Doha, Qatar ended two days early but managed to discuss various problems, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He said the OIC was against Serbian violence against Muslims in Kosovo and urged the Serbs to withdraw their soldiers there.

"We urged that a dialogue be held and autonomy be given to the people of Kosovo. We admit that although the problems in Kosovo is considered an internal one, it has raised threats and affected the stability in the region," Abdullah told reporters upon arrival at the Sultan Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang yesterday after attending the three-day OIC meeting.

The Serbian action against mostly-Muslim ethnic Albanians in Kosovo had prompted foreign ministers at the three-day OIC meeting to condemn the violation of human rights on Albanians.

On Israel, Abdullah said OIC had indicated that it wants to ensure that Israel does not strengthened and broaden its occupation in Palestine.

The communique adopted at the end of the OIC meeting had urged the international community (especially the co-sponsors of the peace process - the UK and Russia) to put pressure on Israel to comply with international laws and end construction of Jewish settlements on occupied territories.

Meanwhile, on the Group of Eight (D-8) Islamic countries, Abdullah said the D-8 countries reviewed what has been done so far and found it satisfactory.

"For Malaysia, we were given the task to have a seminar at the end of this month so that the D-8 will be more familiar with 'takaful' and 'Smart Partnership'.

"We will invite other countries to participate as well," Abdullah said, adding that he had proposed that OIC countries turn to Smart Partnership programmes initiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Abdullah said he also stressed the important role of the private sector in enhancing economic and development cooperation particularly among the D8.

"The idea has been expanded to include Southern Africa and Eastern Europe ... and if the D-8 members are ready to participate in the Smart Partnership Dialogue, I will convey their wishes to Dr Mahathir," he said.

The D-8 comprises eight developing Muslim countries - Malaysia, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The D-8 is mostly economic-oriented and the idea to set up the movement was proposed by former Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan.

Abdullah added that he had numeral bilateral meetings with D-8 countries as well, and most of them were interested in knowing how Malaysia is coping to overcome the economic crisis.

Meanwhile, Abdullah added that he stopped in Dubai on his way to Kuala Lumpur and managed to hear Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's keynote address at the Emirates International Forum.

"Dr Mahathir's address was well-accepted and questions were being fired rapidly.

"The participants were really interested to find out what is happening here.

"The sentiments towards Malaysia is also not affected as they understand that our fundamentals are still strong," Abdullah added.

Dr Mahathir's keynote address at the Forum was entitled "Out of Crisis:
The Opportunities".

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