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Parliament-Foreign (Winding)

SUPPORT AT UN TESTIMONY OF STRONG RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 10 (Bernama) -- The strong support Malaysia received when vying for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council recently was proof of Malaysia's good relations with other countries, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

Relations with other countries, including Asean members, were not affected by the country's economic and political problems, he told the Dewan Rakyat.

Malaysia received 174 votes out of the 176 cast and this number was the biggest ever for any country vying for the seat, he said when winding up the debate on the ministry's proposed estimates under the 1999 Supply Bill.

He said this success was also due to the good work done by Malaysian ambassadors in explaining to other countries Malaysia's political situation and the measures taken for economic recovery.

Abdullah said two Malaysian ambassadors who unwittingly got involved in activities contrary to the government's stand on Malaysian political issues had been enlightened on the actual situation.

Investigations showed that they did not mean to condemn the government, he said.

On Malaysia-Singapore bilateral ties, Abdullah said last week's meeting here between prime ministers Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Goh Chok Tong was the latest development in efforts to put relations back on track after they were at a low ebb because of several problems.

They had reached an understanding on several issues, including water supply to Singapore and KTM land in Singapore, for follow-up meetings to be held between officials, he said.

Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar said the government did not plan to change the postal vote system for armed forces personnel because it was found to be suitable for the personnel who were stationed all over the country.

The government also had no intention to allow political parties into military camps as doing so could disrupt the harmony in these places, he said.

Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa, when winding up the debate on the ministry, said the umbrella concept which under which contracts for village road projects were awarded directly to contractors would be suspended next year.

The ministry would submit a report to the government for it to decide whether to revive the concept the following year, he said.

He said despite the criticisms on the concept it could not be denied that it had its advantages, like allowing roads to be built faster and at better standards.

Deputy Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Idris Jusoh said the ministry would establish networks with entrepreneurs to ensure better local and export markets for their products.

Earlier, Datuk Badruddin Amiruldin (BN-Yan), when seeking clarification had suggested that the ministry set up a marketing unit to help Bumiputera entrepreneurs, especially in the rural areas, to market their products.

Idris also said the ministry had approved 100 taxi permits for a company fully owned by taxi drivers.

If the taxi drivers gave good services, the ministry proposed to issue more permits to their company, he said.

On calls that the ministry's enforcement officers conduct more surprise checks at the Pudu Raya and Putra terminals, he said this was being done regularly.

However, it would be better for commuters to immediately report to the ministry if they were cheated by taxi drivers, he said.

Idris said the ministry was reviewing the Graduate Entrepreneur Scheme which had met with poor response because the monthly salary of RM800 offered to unemployed graduates was not attractive enough.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Nazri Aziz denied that there was a crisis of confidence on the independence and fairness of the country's judiciary.

The executive branch had never controlled or dominated the judicial body, he said when winding up points on the Prime Minister's Department.

"Action will be taken based on existing laws against people who commit offences and they have the right to defend themselves in court. Judges are free to decide on cases without interference from anyone," he said.

Nazri said the Internal Security Act (ISA) was still needed because certain groups were fond of playing on the people's emotions and this could threaten public security and order.

On calls for the Deputy Prime Minister's post to be filled fast so that there is someone to succeed the Prime Minister when the need arises, he said the post would be filled when necessary.

"If anything happens to the Prime Minister, the ruling Barisan Nasional party is capable of finding a successor," he said.

On calls by several members for the government to quickly provide a report on the probe into former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's allegations of being assaulted by police while in detention, he said the Attorney-General's Chambers would study the matter.

The findings of the investigation would determine whether anyone would be charged with causing Datuk Seri Anwar's black eye, he said.

In their debates, Datuk Sukri Mohamed (BN-Machang) and Datuk Abu Zahar Ujang (BN-Kuala Pilah) urged the government to provide the report to regain the people's confidence in it.

The Dewan will sit again tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

HJ YBY