

12 JAN 1998

Mahathir-Cohen

US COMMITTED TO RECOVERY OF ASIAN ECONOMIES

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 12 (Bernama) -- United States Defence Secretary William Cohen today reiterated Washington's commitment to help revitalise the Asian economies badly hit by the currency and stock market crises.

Cohen said US President Bill Clinton was constantly getting the views of his advisers to ensure that Washington played an important and effective role in tackling the economic turmoil in the region.

The US commitment was conveyed to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his 40-minute meeting with Cohen at his office, here, Foreign Ministry Under-Secretary for Southeast Asia and South Pacific Mohamed Arshad M. Hussain said when briefing reporters on the meeting.

Cohen, who arrived here yesterday, is on a 12-day tour of several Asian countries. He also attended the two-day Pacific Dialogue opened by the prime minister today.

Mohamed Arshad said Cohen informed Dr Mahathir that the US, being one of the biggest investors in the region, took a serious view of the problems faced by the Asian economies.

Dr Mahathir welcomed US leaders to visit the region to see for themselves what was happening, Mohamed Arshad said.

This was because the western leaders, including those from the US, regarded the economic problems and position of all countries of the region as similar when in fact each economy had its own strengths and weaknesses, he said.

He added that the prime minister told Cohen that the economic slowdown in Malaysia had forced Kuala Lumpur to drastically reduce the number of its students to the US.

Dr Mahathir also expressed his satisfaction with the bilateral ties, including in trade, between Kuala Lumpur and Washington, he said.

On the presence of US troops in the region, Dr Mahathir said the present strength was sufficient, Mohamed Arshad said. -- BERNAMA

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