

11 JAN 1999

Abdullah-Policy

FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS GAINED THE MASSES' ATTENTION, SAYS ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 11 (Bernama) -- The Foreign Ministry is gaining attention not only from intellectuals but also from the ordinary people who have been keeping track of Malaysia's foreign policy, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said this was evident from people at the grassroots discussing events happening outside Malaysia such as developments in the Bosnian and Palestine conflicts.

The frequent visits by Malaysians to invest and to do business overseas had also made Wisma Putra the focus of attention as the people wanted to know Malaysia's stand on many issues," he said when speaking at a farewell function organised by the Foreign Ministry staff.

Abdullah, 59, the outgoing Foreign Minister, assumed his duties as Deputy Prime Minister today. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced his appointment after the Umno supreme council meeting on Friday.

Abdullah attributed Wisma Putra's success in boosting its performance to Dr Mahathir's active role as head of government at the international scene.

Abdullah said his eight-year tenure as Foreign Minister, his longest as compared to his services in other ministries, had contributed to his political career, leading to his elevation as Deputy Prime Minister.

He said his stint as the head of Wisma Putra was a good experience as it was there he gained the valuable lessons in diplomacy and the conduct of foreign relations.

"Although Wisma Putra is under scrutiny by the government and the people, it managed to ably handle all the foreign issues to the point of getting their recognition," he said.

Pledging to continue his support for Wisma Putra, he called on the staff to give good cooperation to his successor Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

-- BERNAMA

MAM TS