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Malaysian experts to share crisis experience with Argentina

MALAYSIA will send a team of financial experts to Argentina today, where it will share its expertise in managing the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis with government officials and private entrepreneurs in that country.

A four-member team, which includes Pengurusan Danaharta Nasional Bhd chairman Datuk Azman Yahya and National Economic Action Council (NEAC) head of secretariat Dr K. Govindan, will be in Argentina until Sunday.

Other members of the team are Abu Hassan Ailshari Yahya of Bank Negara Malaysia and Kamarul Ariffin Mohd Jamil of Danaharta.

The visit follows a request from the Asociacion Empresaria Argentina, which represents a group of prestigious entrepreneurs, to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad earlier this year.

The Argentines were apparently impressed by Malaysia's success in overcoming the Asian financial crisis.

Argentina, mired in a four-year recession, is vigorously looking for ways to resolve its economic and financial problems. The former South American economic powerhouse defaulted on US\$95 billion (US\$1 = RM3.80) in debt and devalued its peso last December.

Asociacion Empresaria president Oscar Voconte, in his letter to Dr Mahathir, said that although the Malaysian case was somewhat different from Argentina's situation, Argentine officials were nevertheless very interested to know how Malaysia solved its financial and banking problems.

He said Argentina was surprised at how Malaysia had recovered from the financial crisis against all odds, adding that the transfer of know-how would be deeply appreciated and would contribute to the strengthening of bonds that already existed between the two countries.

During their visit, the team is expected to brief Argentine officials and entrepreneurs on the overall approach and strategies that helped Malaysia overcome the financial crisis, with special focus on the role of the NEAC, private sector debt restructuring and measures to strengthen the banking system.

Discussions will also cover Malaysia's strategies in reducing the impact of the crisis on the poor.

The team is also expected to meet with Argentine Minister of Economy Roberto Lavagna and to hold discussions with Argentine economists on Malaysia's experience in managing the crisis.

It will give two presentations on "The Malaysian Experience in Economic Development and Managing of the Financial Crisis" and "The Malaysian Experience in Private Debt Restructuring".