

03 SEP 2003

Abdullah-Mbeki

ABDULLAH: MALAYSIA-SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONS WILL STRENGTHEN

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 3 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is confident that the good relations between Malaysia and South Africa will grow and strengthen further.

"I see this good relations growing and strengthening because there are so many areas which South Africa and Malaysia can cooperate in for the good of both countries," he said.

He said that when he takes over the leadership of the government later he would implement the programmes already agreed upon by both countries.

"I gave him my assurance to implement whatever was agreed upon by the leaders of the two governments yesterday," Abdullah told reporters after calling on South African President Thabo Mbeki at Hotel Nikko, here.

Yesterday, Mbeki, who is on a three-day visit to Malaysia, had a private meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, followed by a delegation meeting led by both leaders.

Abdullah said he and Mbeki also discussed South Africa's role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) because as past chairman, South Africa still had a role to play in the movement.

"I told him that Malaysia, as the NAM chairman, is committed to making a success of the decisions made at the recent NAM summit," he said.

He said Mbeki was satisfied with Malaysian companies operating in South Africa because they had taken the welfare of South Africans into account in their activities relating to investment in that country.

One of the companies was Petronas which had given scholarships to 44 South African students to study in Malaysia, he said.

Asked to comment on the decision of an Indonesian court yesterday which found Muslim cleric Abubakar Ba'asyir guilty of treason but said there was not enough evidence to prove that he led the Jemaah Islamiah network blamed for several bombings in Southeast Asia, Abdullah said the decision was based on the evidence adduced at the trial.

Asked about the implications of the decision, he said "I think there are implications. The Indonesian authorities must continue with their efforts to fight any form of terrorism in Indonesia."

-- BERNAMA

ZAI AHH JK