

19 JAN 2004

Abdullah-Philippines (Arrival)

ABDULLAH ARRIVES IN MANILA FOR SECURITY TALKS

By: Mohd Kamel Othman

MANILA, Jan 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi arrived here this evening for his first state visit to the Philippines after taking over as Prime Minister on Oct 31 last year.

Abdullah, who flew in on a special aircraft from his stopover in Laos for the Asean familiarisation tour, was received at the Villamor Airbase in Pasay City by Philippine Vice President Teofisto T Guingona Jr and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Delia Domingo Albert.

Also present at the airbase to receive the Prime Minister were Foreign Ministry Deputy Secretary-General Datuk Salim Hashim and Minister Counsellor at the Malaysia embassy here, Mohamed Nazri Abdul Karim.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

Tomorrow, Abdullah will hold talks with President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo with existing economic ties between both countries and regional security including the peace initiatives with Mindanao's Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) high on the agenda.

Malaysia is currently trying to restart peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the separatist MILF.

Abdullah will be accorded full military honours at the Malacanang Palace before his meeting with Arroyo. A bilateral meeting between Philippine and Malaysian officials will follow.

Arroyo and Abdullah will hold a joint media conference after the talks to be followed by a luncheon hosted by the President.

Abdullah, who became Malaysia's fifth premier succeeding Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, is touring Asean member countries, a tradition when a new leader comes to office.

Apart from Laos, the Prime Minister has visited Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand.

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