

27 JAN 2004
Abdullah-Asean
ABDULLAH HAPPY WITH ASEAN VISITS

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he is satisfied with his visits to several Asean member countries where he had been well received with truly meaningful welcoming ceremonies.

He said the visits signified the prevailing strong friendship between Malaysia and these countries.

"My visits were actually courtesy calls on heads of the Asean member countries normally performed by someone who has just held the post (of Prime Minister).

"This is actually a tradition which I also inherit. Alhamdulillah, they went well," he told journalists after launching the book `Wira Tak Didandang' (Unsung Heroes), written by Deputy Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin, here today.

Abdullah said the countries he visited, however, had upgraded the visits to the level of a full official visit with various welcoming programmes.

However, he said, what was important was that his visits had opened opportunities to hold discussions with heads of Asean countries and from these discussions, the Prime Minister could feel that relations between Asean countries and Malaysia were cordial.

The meetings too had been widened to discuss bilateral relations in new sectors, Abdullah said.

He was earlier asked to comment on the outcome of his recent visits to the Asean member countries -- Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Laos, the Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia. He is scheduled to visit Myanmar on Jan 29.

He said the Asean leaders had stated that Asean was a regional grouping where closer relations between the member countries in various fields could

be forged to ensure regional security and continued development of the region.

"My wish is that the close cooperation that has been forged all this while will be further enhanced.

"They appreciate the cordial relations prevailing all this while under the leadership of former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and I too will intensify cooperation between Malaysia and Asean countries," he said.

Meanwhile, when asked on outstanding issues between Malaysia and Singapore, Abdullah said he had directed Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar to arrange a programme to discuss them.

Asked whether he would attend the Group 15 (G15) meeting, the Prime Minister said he was waiting for the full report on the matter.

-- BERNAMA

HT NM AO