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Abdullah-Cambodia

ABDULLAH PLEDGES CONTINUED INVESTMENT, ASSISTANCE TO CAMBODIA

By: Abdul Muin Abdul Majid

PHNOM PENH, 26 Jan (Bernama) - Prime Minister Datuk Seri
Abdullah Ahmad

Badawi today pledged continued Malaysian investment in Cambodia as
his

counterpart, Hun Sen, thanked Kuala Lumpur for all the assistance
which had

helped accelerate the socio-economic development of his country,
including

reducing the level of poverty.

Malaysia and Cambodia are also expected to hold their joint
commission

meeting in Kuala Lumpur in April to concretise decisions reached at
discussions involving the two leaders here in conjunction with

Abdullah's

five-hour visit to Phnom Penh.

Speaking to Malaysian reporters after the talks, Abdullah said
Malaysians would play a bigger role in trade and investment with
Cambodia.

"I explained to him that Malaysia is prepared to play a bigger
part,
particularly in infrastructure development in Cambodia," said the
Prime

Minister, whose whirlwind visit to this country of 13 million people
capped

a hectic day which saw him earlier in the day visiting Vietnam.

Abdullah said Hun Sen was happy with the presence of the
Malaysian

business community in Cambodia and expressed confidence over
Malaysia's

continued ability to participate in his country's development
process.

The Malaysian leader also said Cambodia was keen to see closer
cooperation with Malaysia in the field of tourism, with Hun Sen
suggesting

flights by Malaysia Airlines to Siem Reap, the gateway to the fabled
temples of Angkor.

Malaysia was also willing to continue extending assistance to
Cambodia

under the Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme, Abdullah said.

Speaking at a dinner in Abdullah's honour later, Hun Sen said
after

achieving nationwide peace and political stability and the
integration into

regional and international context, the only war that his country
was

fighting against was poverty.

"In recent years, the social and economic development, the national infrastructure rehabilitation and economic growth have been achieved to a satisfactory level.

"However, we have committed ourselves to further speed up socio-economic development so as to cut down the poverty rate as planned," said Hun Sen, who had earlier personally welcomed Abdullah at the Phnom Penh International Airport.

The Cambodian Prime Minister thanked Malaysia for its assistance in human resource development and for encouraging its investors to further invest in his country.

In his remarks at the dinner held prior to his departure for Kuala Lumpur, Abdullah said although a few Malaysian businessmen had encountered setbacks, he was generally optimistic that investor confidence in Cambodia would increase.

He said Malaysia noted that an open and pro-business environment was being promoted by Cambodia, including the establishment of the necessary regulatory and institutional framework.

Having put the divisive past behind them, Abdullah said he was convinced that the resilient and resourceful people of Cambodia would continue to move forward and take advantage of the vast economic opportunities available both in their country and the region.

In this connection, the Prime Minister was hopeful that Cambodia would be able to exploit fully the economic and trade opportunities that would come with its membership of the World Trade Organisation last year.

He also commended Hun Sen for his determination in leading the people of Cambodia towards greater democratisation as well as establishing peace and national stability.

"We await the formation of the new Third Mandated Royal Government of Cambodia following the successful and peaceful general election last year," he added.

At a separate meeting with mostly members of the Malaysian Business Council of Cambodia (MBCC), Abdullah said he would like to see them continue contributing positively towards the good relations between

the two
countries.

It was understandable that they would like to make profit but more importantly, he said, they should demonstrate a high level of business professionalism while in Cambodia.

Noting that he had not received any complaints about Malaysian businessmen here, Abdullah said: "All that I expect from you is to keep the good name of Malaysia flying high."

Established in 1997, the MBBC aims to encourage and support the development of Malaysian business community and investment in Cambodia.

Presently, MBCC members include Petronas, Malaysia Airlines, Cambodia Public Bank, Maybank, Muhibbah Engineering, Sunway Hotel, Quality Textiles and Business Times.

Abdullah was accompanied on his visit to Cambodia by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

The final stop of the Prime Minister's familiarisation tour of Asean capitals is Myanmar. He succeeded Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Oct 31 last year.

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