

RM57m for infrastructure pledged to Palestinians

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PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia has pledged to carry out 16 municipal infrastructure projects - each costing about US\$1mil (RM3.6mil) - in Palestine.

"Let's not look at it as an assistance to the Hamas government but towards helping the Palestinians," said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

"We have agreed to channel financial aid towards specific projects," he told a press conference yesterday after opening a senior officials' preparatory meeting, ahead of the two-day Non-Aligned Movement coordinating bureau meeting here tomorrow.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had announced the financial aid when he met Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on the sidelines of the recently concluded World Economic Forum in Egypt, last week.

"The Government needs to follow-up on this and do the final disbursement, based on the projects that we have agreed to assist in," Syed Hamid said.

The NAM-CoB meeting tomorrow will see two new members - Dominica, as well as Antigua and Barbuda - joining the movement.

They will attend the upcoming NAM Summit in Havana in September as official members of the movement. Previously, they were listed as observing countries, along with 15 other nations, including Brazil, China, Croatia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

On another matter, Syed Hamid said North Korea had agreed to attend the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) to be held in Kuala Lumpur alongside the Asean Ministerial Meeting in July.

The invitation to the forum was made during his visit last week to North Korea.