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Abdullah-Israel

JERUSALEM:GLOBAL IRE IF U.S ENDORSES CONGRESS' RESOLUTION

KUALA LUMPUR, June 27 (Bernama) -- The United States is only subjecting herself to more global ire if the Clinton administration adopts the congressional resolution endorsing the shift of Israel's capital to Jerusalem, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He told reporters at his office here that the Jerusalem issue is a crucial one and a key subject in the Israel-Palestinian talks for peace in West Asia.

Being the mediating country, the US should accept as incumbent upon her to play the role sincerely, objectively and impartially, Abdullah said.

"America should not be seen as being too pro-Israel... although we know in many matters, the US is indeed biased to the Israelis and that the American pro-Israeli policy is a strong policy," he said.

Earlier, Abdullah received and held talks with his Greek counterpart Theodoros Pangalos, who arrived here today for a three-day visit.

The US Congress this month passed a foreign policy bill which brought Washington closer to recognising Jerusalem as Israel's new capital.

Abdullah said Malaysia would persist in opposing the impending shift of the capital from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and would pressure US president Bill Clinton not to endorse the congressional bill.

"We (Malaysia) don't see how the shift can bring about anything good...but instead will only cause a backlash of protests in various forms especially from the Organisation of Islamic Conference. In fact even non-OIC members understand that it would be improper for the US to take such an action," he said.

When asked on Umno Youth's call that Malaysia communicate with the OIC's contact-group countries to initiate pressure against the US, Abdullah said the OIC had indeed voiced its opposition to the relocation of the Israeli capital.

Abdullah said the OIC would re-emphasize the protest at its upcoming summit.

On today's talks with his Greek counterpart, Abdullah said they discussed, among other things, reorganisation of the United Nations and Malaysia's support for Germany and Japan's permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

"Greece understands Malaysia's view that Japan and Germany have the economic and political clout to play an effective role as council permanent members," he said.

Malaysia welcomed Greece's proposal to upgrade ties in tourism and trade with Malaysia which presently totalled RM170 million and in Malaysia's favour, he said.

Greece has granted a 30-day visa-free travel facility for Malaysians effective today to promote greater tourism-related activities between the two countries, he said.

Pangalos invited Malaysian businessmen, especially those in the hospitality industry, to explore joint venture and investment opportunities in Greece, Abdullah said.

Abdullah said Pangalos proposed that both countries sign trade, avoidance of double taxation, investment incentives and economic and technical cooperation agreements.

Pangalos also extended an invitation to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to make an official visit to Greece. -- BERNAMA

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