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APEC-NEWS-RELATIONSHIP (LEAD)  
DR M: NO CHANGE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH U.S.

By: Abdul Rahman Ahmad and Muin Abdul Majid

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there is no change in Malaysia's relations with the United States despite US vice president Al Gore's public support for the anti-government reform movement in Malaysia.

The Prime Minister was responding to a question at the end of the sixth summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum here.

He was queried as to whether there was any change in relationship between Malaysia and the US following Gore's remarks supporting the "reformasi" movement initiated by former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

In his remarks made during the Apec Business Summit dinner on Tuesday night, Gore described those involved in the movement as "the brave people of Malaysia."

His statement angered Malaysians while some Apec leaders too felt that it was improper to raise such issue at Apec forum.

Asked whether he shared Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's view that any outbreak of violence over the coming days would be a result of incitement by the US, Dr Mahathir said: "Well, I stand behind my foreign minister."

Abdullah had said Malaysia would hold the US accountable for any rupture in harmony arising from his irresponsible incitement to lawlessness in the peaceful country.

Asked if Gore was simply trying to make a point about economics and the way the countries could get out of the crisis by increasing democracy and transparency, Dr Mahathir said he did not understand that part of his (Gore) speech.

However, Dr Mahathir said enough comments had been made about the speech and he did not see the need to say anything more.

Dr Mahathir also said that he and Gore did not have any discussion on the political situation in Malaysia.

On other leaders expressing concern about Anwar, including Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, Dr Mahathir said: "I think the Canadian Prime Minister spoke to me and I spoke to him. That's all there is to it."

Asked whether it was appropriate for Chretien to cancel his bilateral meeting with Dr Mahathir, the Prime Minister said he could not hold such meetings with all the Apec leaders as there were 20 of them.

Asked if he felt humiliated to be a prime minister of a country when demonstrations happened resulting many leaders refused to meet him, Dr Mahathir said:

"Now we see demonstrations everywhere, even in the last Apec leaders summit and Chogm (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) in Vancouver. Both times I was there I saw demonstrations by a lot of people."

He said one Apec leader remarked that he was surprised to see there were no soldiers and tanks on the road here.

"They (Apec leaders) were able to move about freely, travelled all the way from the city to Cyberjaya without seeing any soldiers and policemen with guns and armoured cars on the road," he said.

The leaders spent the whole day at Cyberjaya, Malaysia's future intelligent city, some 40km from here, for their customary retreat.

Asked whether he was concerned over the protest in Vancouver last year, particularly about the pepper-spraying of students when he was there, the

Prime Minister replied: "I dont know, they didn't do it to me so we are not bothered by it. It is a part of the culture."

Dr Mahathir said some Apec leaders commended him for the remarkable situation in the country beacuse they had the impression, based on foreign media reports, that the country was "in flames and there were riots".

"That was what one of the leaders told me, one of the less friendly ones," he said.

On whether he thought globalisation of politics was coming about as a corollary of the globalisation of economies, Dr Mahathir: "Globalisation of economy apparently has got some effects of politics because we see some governments were affected by it even pushed over due to globalisation of economy."

Asked whether elements of democracy in promoting economic action was discussed during the meeting, Dr Mahathir said he did not remember any discussion about elements of democracy, "but they discussed about openness, transparency, good governance".

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