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Mahathir-Bush

MAHATHIR SAYS BUSH'S WIN WILL HEAL STRAINED TIES WITH WASHINGTON

ALOR SETAR, Dec 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said a victory for Republican George W. Bush in the United States presidential election will see healing of strained ties between Kuala Lumpur and Washington.

"I hope Bush's victory will restore good ties between the two countries," he told reporters who approached him upon arrival at the airport here today on Bush emerging U.S president-elect after Democrat candidate Al Gore formally conceded defeat.

Dr Mahathir said Bush would definitely not come to Malaysia and urge Malaysians to stage an uprising against the government as Gore did in Kuala Lumpur two years ago.

In November 1998, Gore angered Malaysians when, speaking at an Apec business advisory council dinner, he praised rioting supporters of jailed former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim for their bravery.

Gore conceded defeat today and made way to Bush to become the 43rd U.S, president after the U.S. Supreme Court voted 5-4 against ordering a recount of votes in Florida.

"I'm happy that Al Gore lost," said Dr Mahathir.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Malaysia hoped that the incoming Bush administration would concentrate more on seeking for lasting peace in West Asia.

He said Bush's victory was as expected and that Malaysia believed it could look forward to enjoying improved ties with the U.S under the Bush administration.

"We are convinced we can have good ties with the new U.S. administration and we'll monitor further developments," Syed Hamid told reporters at Parliament House lobby.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia's special hope for the Bush administration was that it could put first efforts to seek peace in West Asia and settlement to the Arab-Israel conflict as well as the Palestinian problem.

"It is crucial that peace is achieved as it involved the well-being of the region and its people.

"We hope the Bush administration will apply its influence on Israel to re-start peace talks," Syed Hamid added.

-- BERNAMA

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