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Bush-Mahathir

BUSH THANKS MAHATHIR, SAYS WAR AGAINST TERRORISM NOT AGAINST ISLAM

By: Salmy Hashim

WASHINGTON, Oct 2 (Bernama) -- President George W. Bush Monday told Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in a telephone call from the White House that the American war on terrorism was "against evil and not Islam."

Spokesman Ari Fleischer said here that the president thanked the prime minister for his condolences on behalf of the people of Malaysia in the wake of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

"The two leaders agree that the unprecedented nature of the terrorist threat requires new types of tactics and new forms of international cooperation," Fleischer said in his daily briefing at the White House.

Bush and Dr Mahathir discussed the economic repercussions of the attacks and "they look forward to exchanging views in more depth at the APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) forum leaders meeting" in Shanghai from Oct 20-21, he added.

Earlier, Bush claimed progress in the fight against terrorism in a visit to the Federal Emergency Management Agency Monday.

"Thus far, we've frozen US\$6 million (RM22.8 million) in bank accounts linked to terrorist activity. We've frozen 30 al Qaeda accounts in the United States and 20 overseas. And we're just beginning," he said.

On the military front, the US has deployed 29,000 military personnel and two carrier battle groups, as well as an amphibious-ready group and several hundred military aircraft. About 17,000 members of the Reserve have been called to active duty, as well as several thousands National Guard personnel operating under state authority.

Although the military was ready, the president conceded that this was a "different kind of war. It's hard to fight a guerilla war with conventional forces."

The president said that he had received 46 pledges of support from groups ranging from NATO, Asean, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), and the Organisation of American States (OAS).

"We're a patient nation. We're a nation who has got a long-term view; a nation that's come to realise that in order to make freedom prevail, the evildoers will be forced to run, and will eventually be brought to justice," Bush said.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has conducted hundreds of interviews and searches, issued hundreds of subpoenas, and arrested or detained more than 400 people as it investigates the attacks. About 150 terrorists and their supporters, as well, have been arrested or detained in 25 different countries.

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