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Mahathir-U.S

M'SIA SEEKS TO MINIMISE MISUNDERSTANDING WITH WASHINGTON

KUALA LUMPUR, April 5 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia looks forward to having refreshed ties with the United States under the Bush administration.

This includes minimising misunderstanding between Kuala Lumpur and Washington.

Dr Mahathir said he conveyed this to the U.S. ambassador B. Lynn Pascoe when they met at the Prime Minister's Office at Parliament House here last Tuesday.

"The U.S. ambassador called on me. I explained the government's stand towards the new U.S. administration.

"We thought that with the new administration, perhaps we can invigorate our ties with the U.S. and lessen misunderstanding between us and the U.S.," he told reporters at the end of his visit to the Information Ministry at Angkasapuri here today.

Reporters asked the prime minister to elaborate on his meeting with Pascoe.

It was Pascoe's first meeting with Dr Mahathir since assuming the ambassadorship here on March 1 1999.

Kuala Lumpur and Washington have had strained ties because of perceived U.S. interference in Malaysia's internal affairs.

Last August Malaysia took exception to Washington's attacks against the Malaysian judiciary for its handling of the case involving former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Former U.S. vice president Al Gore, whom Bush defeated in last year's presidential election, had also angered Malaysians by expressing support for Anwar's so-called movement for reform when Gore addressed a function during the 1998 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum meeting here.

At his meeting with Pascoe, Dr Mahathir said he also stressed that Malaysia would continue being vocal on issues that the country strongly feel about.

"Being a free country we shall say it out when there is a need to speak out. We do not want our credibility to suffer for taking sides," he said.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar's disclosure yesterday that Singapore and Indonesian diplomats were among officials of foreign missions here who attended the recent closed-door briefing on the Anwar issue by Parti Keadilan Nasional at a Petaling Jaya Hotel.

"They should be sensitive to our feelings and not interfere in our domestic affairs," said Dr Mahathir.

He said such meddling could put in jeopardy the spirit of Asean which groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Syed Hamid had said officials from the Australian, British, Canadian, French, Spanish, Swedish, Dutch, U.S., German and New Zealand missions also attended the briefing.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia preferred that outsiders do not meddle in its internal affairs.

"The government also has not summoned ambassadors for explanation although we found that many of them view the government negatively.

"Despite this we choose not to offer them explanation although we can

do so because we have information that they don't," he said.

Dr Mahathir re-emphasised the danger of the country being re-colonised if Malaysians have the penchant to court outsiders to meddle in the country's affairs.

Asked about the mechanism for the proposed Nasional Unit Trust Trust Fund as spelled out in the Third Outline Perspective Plan (OPP3), Dr Mahathir said: "It is a trust fund open to Malaysians of all races. I shall explain the mechanics when I launch it."

-- BERNAMA

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