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MAHATHIR-BUSH

PM MAY MEET BUSH AT SHANGHAI'S APEC SUMMIT IF OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS

By: Mohd Arshi Daud

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 2 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said he might meet US President George W. Bush bilaterally on the sidelines of the upcoming Apec Leaders Summit if there is an opportunity to do so.

The Prime Minister, when asked by newsmen whether he would like to have bilateral talks with Bush, said, "I am not rejecting it, I don't say I don't want to and it all depends on the circumstances.

"If we have an opportunity to meet, we will meet. If we don't have the opportunity, then it's all right."

This year's Apec Leaders Summit will be held in Shanghai in October.

Speaking to newsmen after presenting a keynote address at Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia's Dialogue here Dr Mahathir said it was normal for leaders to meet at such meetings.

"It is not a question of requesting or anything like that. If we have the time, we will meet. If we don't have the time, we won't meet. That has always been the practice," he said.

On reports that the US had imposed three conditions for the meeting, including better treatment for Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and releasing some people detained under the Internal Security Act, Dr Mahathir said, "I am not aware about this thing."

The Prime Minister also said that such bilateral meetings should not have any conditions attached.

"I don't think we should have conditions. If we want to talk, we talk as far as we are concerned."

Dr Mahathir said there were a lot of people who would like to see Malaysia have better relations with the current US Administration and they were trying on their own to improve the bilateral relations.

"Some of them are business people, some are people who have an interest in Malaysia and would like to see better relations between Malaysia and the US."

Dr Mahathir was also asked on reports over Umno Youth's disagreement with the Umno Supreme Council's proposal to implement the meritocracy system for bumiputera university admission.

"I don't think they disagreed. It's just that they don't understand what this is all about," he said.

The Umno President said it was unfortunate that Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein was absent during the recent Sumpreme Council meeting when the decision was made.

But Hishammuddin, who is also Youth and Sports Minister, was present at yesterday's Cabinet meeting where the issue was explained, Dr Mahathir disclosed.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday that all ministers supported the proposal after it was brought up and discussed.

-- BERNAMA

MAD SHY DVS