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Shanghai was the 'best of Apec summits'

Firdaus Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The recent Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation meeting in China was the most successful to date for Malaysia as Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad managed to make the West understand the nation's stand on major international issues.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said it was also one of the most significant international meetings for the Prime Minister.

"From my own analysis based on reports from China, this is the only successful Apec meet for Malaysia and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as he has made them understand us better," he told reporters after officiating at the 'Government Agencies Corporatisation' seminar this morning.

At the Shanghai meeting Dr Mahathir had managed, after years of hard work, to open the eyes of the West to the way Malaysians saw things.

He said that if previously Malaysia's every stand and action in the international arena was construed to be "against-America," the environment at the recent Apec meet was very different.

"They seem to understand us better now... they realise that we just don't take sides but we merely speak the truth without fear or favour," Abdullah said when asked to comment on the improving relations between Kuala Lumpur and Washington.

Abdullah said the meeting between Dr Mahathir and President George W. Bush, on the sidelines of Apec, was very significant.

"I feel that the meeting will help create a better understanding between both leaders and both nations on issues which were previously misunderstood or misinterpreted," he said.

Abdullah said Malaysia had been previously branded as a nation which always opposed the US, when in actual fact Malaysia only stated the truth of things.

"We chose to speak the truth and Dr Mahathir is naturally like that... he speaks his mind when it is true... and our stand is often extensively deliberated during Cabinet meetings," he said.

Abdullah said that under Dr Mahathir's leadership, Malaysia had maintained a consistent stand in international co-operation and issues pertaining to aggression or terrorism.

"Even when Iraq invaded Kuwait, we were against the move to the extent that we were accused of taking sides.

"We supported the move to force the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait, but at the same time we also objected to the prolonged economic sanctions imposed on Iraq," said Abdullah.

He said that until today, Malaysia still opposed the sanctions on Iraq as innocent citizens were being victimised.

He said the on-going war in Afghanistan provided a similar scenario where Malaysia was not agreeable to military offensives which killed the innocent despite supporting the fight against terrorism.

"So it's not whether we support the US or oppose them; it's just that we have our own views," Abdullah said.