

15/10/2001

`Vital maintain political and social stability in country'

KOTA KINABALU, Sun. - It is important to maintain political and social stability in Malaysia to face economic challenges stemming from the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

US-based Global Management Associates president Dr Harry G. Harris said the Malaysian Government's decision to detain six members of Kumpulan Militan Malaysia under the Internal Security Act showed it was aware of the need to safeguard security.

"If you don't have peace, stability and security, it will affect the economy and jobs. In the US, we have lost 200,000 jobs in the last month (due to the terrorist attacks).

"The (Malaysian) Government also has to reiterate its commitment to trade liberalisation and globalisation. The upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation meeting in Shanghai will provide an opportunity for (Prime Minister Datuk Seri) Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) to meet with (US President) George W. Bush. This is important because there was contact between the two leaders on terrorism," he said on Friday.

Harris, who held talks in Kuala Lumpur, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu last week under the US Embassy Public Affairs Speaker Programme, was asked what steps Malaysia could take to cushion the effects of a further decline in the US economy after the attacks in New York and Washington.

Since 1972, Harris has managed investment properties and has been a global and business consultant. He serves as a member of the board of the Global Institute of Technology, a worldwide graduate education enterprise.

He is also visiting professor at the University of California.

He said national leaders needed to join the fight against terrorism for the security of their own nations, and that this involved not just military, but economic and political actions as well.

"It is a multi-faceted, dedicated programme with a coalition ... if you have the world community coming together, you are going to restrict the access of these people (terrorists)."

Harris said his views were personal, not on behalf of the US Government.

On the impact of the attacks on the US on the Malaysian economy, Harris said it was important for the country to maintain friendly relations with the US.

"We have a very tight economic relationship. Your economic future is closely linked with the US. If the US is less able to buy from Malaysia, that means Malaysians will be affected.

"If the Government can create an atmosphere for enhanced economic and trade relations, it will be to the interest of both countries because we both benefit from expanded trade."

Harris also said American economists believed it would take one year for the US economy to turn around.

"The consensus is that the American economy will come back in full swing in 12 months. It took us seven months to come back from the last recession in the early 1990s," he said.

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