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US Navy assured of access to local ports

PUTRAJAYA, Thurs. - The Government today assured the United States navy that it would continue to allow its navy ships to stop at Malaysian ports when the need arises.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar today said the Government would give full co-operation to the US navy's request to use Malaysia's port facilities.

"We adopt a liberal attitude to any country wishing to use our facilities so long their policies are not contrary to our interests," he said after meeting the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Pacific Command Admiral Dennis Cutler Blair at the Renaissance Palm Garden Resort here.

He added that Blair had expressed his gratitude to the government for their continuous support and positive response in their request for the use of the ports.

The meeting was also to discuss issues related to regional security and defence exercises with Malaysia to help foster closer bilateral defence ties.

Meanwhile, on the United Nations reconciliation talks with Myanmar, Syed Hamid commended UN envoy Tan Sri Razali Ismail's effort during his five-day mission to Myanmar.

At Press conference at the Mandarin Oriental hotel later, Blair said the US was keen and prepared to support and provide assistance to counter piracy off Malaysian waters and other countries in the region.

"If the incident occurs in international waters, the US would respond readily. However, it is also the responsibility of those nations with jurisdiction over certain waters to counter the threat," he said.

Blair, who is on a three-day official visit to Malaysia, yesterday had called on Armed Forces chief general Tan Sri Mohamad Zahidi Zainuddin and the Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Shafie Apdal.

He also met with the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak today.

Blair is the 19th officer to hold the position of USCINPAC since he assumed duty on Feb 20, 1999.

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