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US-Malaysia

US WANTS MALAYSIA TO SHARE EXPERIENCE IN COMBATING TERRORISM

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 15 (Bernama) -- United States Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick called on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today and conveyed to him President George W. Bush's appreciation of a letter sent to him last week by the Prime Minister on his counter-terrorism proposals.

He stated that the President was keen to meet Dr Mahathir to further discuss the issue at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum in Shanghai over the weekend.

Zoellick, a member of Bush's cabinet with the rank of ambassador and serves as the President's principal trade policy adviser and chief trade negotiator, also stated that the US was interested to learn from Malaysia ways to deal with terrorists as the country had countered similar problems with the communists three decades ago.

A Wisma Putra official, who was present at the one-hour meeting at the Prime Minister's Office here, said the US also appreciated the messages of condolence sent by Malaysia and Dr Mahathir for those who perished when two planes crashed into the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington on Sept 11, killing more than 5,000 people.

At the meeting, the Prime Minister reiterated Malaysia's stand against terrorism and the country's concern over the spread of terrorism.

"Dr Mahathir also told the US Trade Representative that the fight against terrorism should be in unison with the international community and that the root cause to this menace should be tackled first," said the official.

The Prime Minister also explained that these unacceptable acts of terror by certain groups were mainly perpetrated by people who were misguided.

He also reiterated that US air strikes on Afghanistan would not solve the problem pertaining to terrorism but in fact would complicate it further, said the Foreign Ministry official.

He said Dr Mahathir also wanted the US to find a way to settle the problem in Palestine as this was an issue which contributed to the terrorist situation worldwide.

"However the Prime Minister also told him that he hoped this criticism would not be construed as a sign that Malaysia is anti-American," said the official.

Zoellick, said the official, expressed the US' understanding that Malaysia was not anti-American and "in fact acknowledged that Malaysians are among the warmest and most friendliest people in the world."

The official said that the US views Malaysia as a model for developing countries in terms of progress, development and religious tolerance.

The discussion also focused on economic matters mainly the World Trade Organisation's new round of talks.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that there need to be an agenda for the talks before it begins.

"They also agreed that many economies are suffering because of the attacks and something must be done to stimulate growth, but the Prime Minister said that Malaysia is already taking this up and can weather the present economic climate," he said.

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