

FBI to enhance ties in fight against terrorism

STAR 16 MAR 2002

KUALA LUMPUR: The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has expressed its gratitude to Malaysia for its cooperation in the fight against terrorism and intends to enhance the relationship between the two countries by sharing information on measures against the menace.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said FBI director Robert S. Mueller III conveyed this during a meeting on Thursday.

Mueller was in Malaysia for two days as part of a series of visits to Asia-Pacific countries. He also held talks with Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai and senior police officers at Bukit Aman on Thursday.

"At the meeting, we took the opportunity to explain our stand on terrorism and efforts to maintain peace and harmony in the country," said Abdullah.

He said he gave Mueller background information on Malaysia's need to maintain peace to ensure smooth development

of the country's economy.

"We have to make sure that the country's economy progresses well for the citizens to enjoy employment opportunities and the benefits of a healthy economy," he told a press conference after attending the national level Maa' Hijrah celebrations at Stadium Putra in Bukit Jalil yesterday.

He said Mueller understood Malaysia's stand against terrorism and did not release any press statements accusing it of being a terrorist state or harbouring terrorist groups.

"Any assumptions by outsiders, especially the press, that linked Malaysia to terrorist groups is not welcome as it would have adverse effects on our economy in terms of investment," he said, adding that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had also expressed his dissatisfaction with such inaccurate reports.

He said that when foreign publications played up such issues, the Prime Minister and

Malaysians had the right to be angry over the reports.

"The situation is made worse when pictures of other countries are used to depict chaos in Malaysia.

"This gives the wrong perception to readers," said Abdullah.

On Singapore's land reclamation project, Abdullah said Malaysia would send a protest note to the island republic when the six-month survey on the effects of the works in the Straits of Johor had been compiled.

When asked if Malaysia would request Singapore to stop the reclamation works, Abdullah said it would depend on the information gathered from the survey.

"If their actions do have negative effects, we will ask them to stop," he added.

Abdullah also said that Malaysia would adopt the stand by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting on Zimbabwe once the review of the Commonwealth Observers Group's report was completed.