

07 APR 2002
Mahathir-Bush
DR M TO RAISE PALESTINE ISSUE WITH BUSH

LANGKAWI, April 7 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he will raise the Palestinian issue in his meeting with US President George W. Bush in Washington next month.

The Prime Minister said he would raise the issue as he had promised the Palestine representative to explain the atrocities inflicted by the Israelis on the Palestinians.

"I've promised the Palestinian representative to bring up their problem with Bush," he told reporters after visiting the Crystal Village owned by LangkawiiCrystal, Malaysia's leading producer of crystal goods, at Pulau Rebak here.

Dr Mahathir ended his three-day visit to Langkawi today after attending various functions with the people and visiting several development projects on this resort island.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on a Reuters report on Wednesday that Bush had invited Dr Mahathir for a meeting with him between May 12 and 14 in Washington.

The report, quoting a diplomatic source, said the visit to the White House would be the first for Dr Mahathir since 1994 after his meeting with the then President Bill Clinton.

Reuters said Dr Mahathir's visit would be a major step forward in enhancing bilateral ties between the two countries besides Washington's recognition of Dr Mahathir as a moderate Muslim leader.

Besides the Palestinian issue, Dr Mahathir said the meeting would also provide an opportunity for him to explain the stand of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in efforts to fight terrorism.

He said the invitation was also a good opportunity for him to explain Malaysia's stand on terrorism.

"It's good that he has invited me. I can give my views on various issues to Bush," he said.

On the Palestine crisis, Dr Mahathir said the international community had made an effort to pressure Israel to stop its attacks on the Palestinians.

"But Israel seemed to be adamant and arrogant to the extent that it had refused to meet the representative of the European Union (EU)," he said.

Asked how Malaysia could help Palestine, Dr Mahathir said: "We can only apply pressure, we can't go to war."

In the morning, Dr Mahathir met 18 senior officials of the American Congress at a hotel in Teluk Burau.

The meeting was arranged by US-Malaysia Exchange Association. Also present was the association's President Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayob.

Dr Mahathir did not disclose details of the meeting but said it gave an opportunity to Malaysia to explain its stand on several issues.

On his three-day visit to Langkawi from Friday, Dr Mahathir said the visit had enhanced his rapport with the people on this island.

"Besides that, I came here to hold discussions with several quarters to woo tourists from Saudi Arabia to use the yachting facilities in Langkawi," he said.

Asked to comment on newspaper reports on Friday that the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) was investigating irregularities in the management and distribution of Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) loans, Dr Mahathir said investigations must be carried out so that action could be

taken against those involved.

"If there is a report lodged, we must investigate because without investigations, we cannot take any action," he said.

On the call by a Singapore MP to his countrymen to refrain from shopping in Johor Baharu, Dr Mahathir said: "That's only what he said, we don't care."

Nee Soon Central MP Ong Ah Heng was quoted in Singapore's Straits Times on Saturday as saying that it was time for Singaporeans to make a stand to support their own country.

During his visit to the Crystal Village, Dr Mahathir was briefed by the Managing Director of Kumpulan LangkawiiCrystaal Abdoul (Rpt Abdoul) Rahman Abdullah on the company's plan to build a crystal mosque.

-- BERNAMA

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