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Abdullah-Cheney

KL-WASHINGTON AGREE TO ENHANCE COOPERATION IN WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

By: E.Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 18 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and the United States have agreed that both countries should forge ahead in their bilateral cooperation in the war against terrorism.

This was agreed to in the meeting between US Vice President Dick Cheney and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in Washington Tuesday.

In a telephone interview with Bernama from Washington, Abdullah said that they should not only continue but enhance such cooperation.

"We both agree that cooperation in the war against terrorism is excellent and should be continued and enhanced," said Abdullah when asked to elaborate on his meeting with Cheney.

Besides Cheney, Abdullah also held discussions with senior US Congressmen and members of the Bush Cabinet.

Abdullah's two-day working visit to Washington was a follow-up to the visit by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to the US in May, this year.

Abdullah said that he informed Cheney that Malaysia hoped that Washington would not perceive or view Islam and Muslims as being linked to terrorism.

"I informed him (Cheney) that Islam promotes love for peace and progress," he said.

He said that Malaysia was striving to uphold the image of Islam following the misconception of various parties especially after the Sept 11 attacks.

Abdullah also indicated to the US leader Malaysia's support for President George W. Bush's statement in the United Nations last week on the role to be played by the UN in the Iraq issue.

"Malaysia supports President Bush in bringing up the matter to the UN instead of proceeding with its unilateral action," the Deputy Prime Minister said.

Earlier, Bush and US ally Britain were reported to have planned attacks on Iraq as Baghdad is alleged to be in possession of weapons of mass destruction and Iraq has also refused to allow UN weapons inspectors to enter the country to investigate such allegations.

Last Monday, Iraq announced that it will permit the unconditional return of UN weapons inspectors to search for such weapons of mass destruction.

Abdullah said that the announcement by Iraq showed that multilateral diplomacy exercised by member countries of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on Iraq had succeeded.

"This is excellent multilateral diplomacy and should be appreciated and recognised. We hope that the United States will continue to act on the Iraq issue within the scope the UN," he said.

Abdullah said that it was the duty of the UN to ensure that Iraq provides assistance to the weapons inspectors to be dispatched by the world body.

"I hope that from this development and the actions of NAM and OIC including the Arab countries, the United States will regard this as the wish of the international community for Iraq to cooperate towards the resolution of the Iraq issue beginning with the acceptance of the (UN) investigators," he said.

On his visit to Washington and his meeting with several senior members of the Bush administration, Abdullah said that it had been successful.

"I can tell that they are showing that bilateral relations between America and Malaysia at this time are getting better especially following the visit of our Prime Minister and his meeting with Bush (in Washington last May)," said Abdullah.

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