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KL mulls extradition agreement with the US

PUTRAJAYA, Mon. - Malaysia is studying the prospect of a bilateral agreement with the United States to extradite terrorists and money-launderers.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said today such an agreement would benefit both countries as terrorism and other crimes were a bane to society.

"Malaysia is committed to information exchange and the training of manpower in the fight against global crime, including terrorism, through mutual legal assistance.

"We are already a signatory to the US-led anti-terrorism initiatives and are now collaborating with them on other criminal matters."

Rais said this after receiving a courtesy call from the US National Security Council's Asian Affairs director James Moriarty at the Prime Minister's Department.

US Ambassador to Malaysia Marie T. Huhtala was present. Their talks centred on regional security.

Rais said since Sept 11, Washington's perception of Malaysia as a bastion against terrorism had led to improved bilateral relations, especially with the visit to the US by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in May.

"We are now working on strengthening these segments following the deep-lasting impression created by Dr Mahathir's visit to the US.

"The US and Malaysia share common interests in combating crime and we are looking at broader issues like extradition and mutual legal assistance."

Moriarty is scheduled to call on Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar tomorrow to discuss bilateral issues.