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Mahathir-Bush

MALAYSIA-US AGREE ON TWO-PRONG APPROACH AGAINST TERRORISM

By: Jaafar Hussin and E.Sivabalan

WASHINGTON, May 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia and the United States share the view that military action and finding the root causes of terrorism must be addressed simultaneously to effectively stem the global phenomena.

He said both countries believed that military action alone would not be able to put an end to terrorism.

"Military action and the finding of the root causes of terrorism must go hand in hand," he told a media conference after his meeting with President George W. Bush at the White House here Tuesday.

Dr Mahathir, who is on his second day of his three-day working visit to the US, also held talks with vice-president Dick Cheney and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice.

Dr Mahathir said during his talks with Bush, the President agreed with his definition of terrorism which he had espoused at the recent Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur.

The prime minister had among others stated that exploding bombs in public places and killing innocent civilians or holding people to ransom as shields must be condemned as acts of terrorism and anyone committing such acts for whatever cause must be regarded as terrorists.

Referring to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Dr Mahathir said the US stand on recognizing a Palestinian state was a step in the right direction in finding a solution to the dispute.

The prime minister said he and Bush agreed on the need to tackle the causes of the Palestinian uprising so that there would be peace in that region.

Asked whether human rights issue in Malaysia was a topic of discussion, Dr Mahathir said by and large, other members of the Bush administration understood better the way the Malaysian government deal with problems in the country.

Earlier, at a joint news conference prior to their meeting, Dr Mahathir said he had wanted to follow-up on his discussion with Bush on international terrorism since they first met during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) meeting in Shanghai last October.

He said the follow-up meeting was vital in order to find out the strategies being worked out by the US to counter terrorism.

Asked on the reports of links between some Malaysians and the al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan, Dr Mahathir said the Malaysian government now has evidence that a few Malaysians who were bent on overthrowing the Malaysian government, had links with the terrorist group.

Asked what Malaysia could expect from his talk on terrorism with Dr Mahathir, Bush said the US was more than willing to share its intelligence and information pertaining to the fight against terror with the Malaysian government and vice versa.

Bush said both countries shared common enemy that operated under the cloak of several institutions before striking.

"They are not like the enemy we've known before. And in order to make sure our respected societies are as secure as possible, we must share intelligence," the President said.

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