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Mahathir-US

MALAYSIA HOPES US WILL NOT INTERFERE IN ITS AFFAIRS

SEPANG, May 17 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia hopes that the United States will not interfere in its internal affairs just as Malaysia does not like to interfere in the affairs of other countries.

"Just as we don't like to interfere in the affairs of other countries, they should not interfere in ours," the prime minister said upon his return at the KL International Airport, here, after a three-day visit to the US.

He said Malaysia did not hope for anything from his visit except to foster relations with the US.

He was asked whether with the improved Malaysia-US relations, resulting from his visit, the Bush administration would not interfere in Malaysia's internal affairs like what the previous administration had done.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was always willing to exchange information on efforts to fight terrorism.

"While we are willing to exchange information, it does not mean that when something becomes our country's business we will hand it to others," he said.

Asked on his visit, Dr Mahathir said: "In the sense that I was able to deliver my message, I think it was a success. It (message) was listened to, it was not rejected. In that sense, I consider it a success."

He said he expressed Malaysia's views on various issues like terrorism, the situation in this region and international problems.

He said President George W. Bush listened and agreed with his views, especially those on issues related to the recognition of a Palestinian state.

"Although we know that the Likud Party in Israel has rejected the establishment of a Palestinian state, Bush appeared firm. This is a development that will contribute to a solution of the problem in West Asia," he said.

He said Bush also congratulated him on Malaysia's success in ending the problem in Myanmar and told him that Malaysia's stand on other matters apparently did not contradict that of the US government.

He said it was a morale booster for Malaysia when many countries, including the Islamic nations, agreed with its views on many international issues.

"We do it not for our own interest but on the policy that we uphold justice for everyone. Our stand is to resolve problems so that terrorism in the world can be reduced," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he also expressed Malaysia's intention to buy the Super Hornet fighter jets which, according to the US, were their latest planes which had never been approved to other countries.

"Our plan is to trade-in the old fighter jets for these new ones because the new ones are more superior than the old. That's our plan but it will take time.

Asked about the US' views on Iraq, Dr Mahathir said he did not care if the US wanted to topple Saddam Hussein's government as long as it did not make the Iraqis the victims.

"We know that the Iraqis are suffering while Saddam Hussein is not suffering even a bit from their (US) pressure," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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