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US-Beacon

M'SIA A BEACON OF STABILITY IN THE REGION, SAYS US OFFICIAL

KUALA LUMPUR, April 15 (Bernama) -- A United States official said today that moderate and predominantly Muslim Malaysia plays an important role in the global war on terrorism and is a beacon of stability in the region.

Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly said over the last six months, the US had been gratified by the strong contributions made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, his government and the Malaysian people to the international effort to eradicate terrorism.

"We want to further strengthen our cooperation in this area and further invigorate our overall bilateral relationship," he said at a media briefing at the US embassy here on the outcome of his visit to Malaysia which began on Friday.

He said the US was pleased that Dr Mahathir had accepted an invitation from President George W. Bush to visit Washington from May 13 to 15 where the two leaders would undoubtedly discuss the full range of bilateral and global issues.

During his trip here, Kelly, who described it as "very productive", met Dr Mahathir, other Malaysian leaders, private Malaysian experts in governmental affairs and members of the American business community.

Queried on the planned visit, Kelly said that he did not think there was a precise agenda for the trip but noted that it would be held with the background of good bilateral relations and numerous developments taking place including improvements in the Malaysian economy.

He said that the US and Malaysia also enjoyed good business and trade relations.

"In the case of President Bush, (a) very important (thing) is to say thank you to a respected leader for a very stirring response in a global campaign against terror," he said.

Kelly said that it would be the case of two leaders -- one relatively young and in office for less than a year and a half and another with great experience in Asia and the world over many years -- to communicate in a direct and honest way.

He was also asked on whether the US was satisfied with efforts taken by governments in Southeast Asia to combat the terrorism menace.

"We are appreciative of their efforts. Governments have responded in different ways that are appropriate to their situation," he said.

Kelly added that such positive response was one of the heartening elements for Americans since the deadly terror attacks on New York and Washington on Sept 11.

He is expected to leave Malaysia today.

-- BERNAMA

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