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Parliament-Winding up (Foreign)

MALAYSIA'S STAND ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES NOT RHETORIC

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 9 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar today rejected opposition's claims that Malaysia's vocal approach over several international issues as being rhetoric.

He said the country's views were actually vital in international relations apart from being beneficial for the world community.

"At present it (Malaysia's stand) may look like only rhetoric but this evolves into an approach beneficial for the whole of the world community," Syed Hamid said when winding up the Budget 2003 debate on behalf of the ministry at the Dewan Rakyat here.

He said if Malaysia and other nations had kept quiet, the United States (US) could have resorted to a unilateral action by attacking Iraq but as there were protests, it had forced the superpower to negotiate with the United Nations (UN) over the planned attack on the Gulf country.

Syed Hamid said despite being labelled as powerless and without any military power, Malaysia's vocal stand had brought much benefits to other countries in the world.

He said this when replying to a question from Dr Syed Azman Syed Ahmad Nawawi (PAS-Kuala Terengganu) who claimed that Malaysia's action against US hegemony as rhetoric because the superpower was capable of initiating any unilateral action.

Dr Syed Azman also wanted to know whether Malaysia's actions had strained relations with the US, its biggest trading partner and Malaysia's trade ties with Israel through the sale of the country's goods via Singapore.

Syed Hamid said the US position as a trading partner did not change as it was a commercial relation which should not be mixed with international politics and the country's integrity.

He said despite Malaysia's warming up of its bilateral ties with the US, the government could not compromise its interest and sovereignty as well as readiness to voice its stand in any international forum against actions taken by the superpower.

On ties with Israel, the Foreign Minister stressed that Malaysia did not have any trade or diplomatic relations with the country.

He said if there were Malaysian-made goods sold by other countries in Israel, then it was the country's right to purchase these products.

On the Palestinian issue, Syed Hamid said Malaysia was firm in its stand over the status of Palestine and Al Quds Al-Sharif (Jerusalem) in line with resolutions taken by the UN and Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

He said the Malaysian government objected the US Congress' move to pass a bill recognizing Jerusalem as the capital for Israel.

"This is prejudicial to the Palestinian demand and the US position as a neutral party in the peace negotiations held between Palestine and Israel," he said.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia's stand was that, Article 214 in the US' "State Department Authorisation Bill H.R. 1646" on Jerusalem, should be scrapped.

He said this was necessary as any decision on Jerusalem now was not conducive, as the issue was the most sensitive in efforts to seek a peace formula to end the Palestinian conflict.

He said Malaysia would continue to protest against human rights'

violations committed by Israel against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"Malaysia will continue to call on the international community to urge Israel cease all its military actions and withdraw fully from Palestinian territory and abides by the UN Security Council resolution," he said.

On the US treatment for visiting Malaysian leaders, Syed Hamid said Wisma Putra, through its Embassy, had given early notice of such visits and hoped that appropriate diplomatic protocol was accorded for the leaders.

However since the Sept 11 incident, the US had become jittery and had set aside protocol and diplomatic treatment, replacing it with high security measures, said Syed Hamid.

On the shoddy treatment given to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on their recent visits to the US, Syed Hamid said the US, through its Embassy here, had regretted the incident.

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