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US-M'ASIA

U.S. COMFORTABLE WITH PAK LAH, SAYS U.S. AMBASSADOR HUHTALA

KUALA LUMPUR, June 26 (Bernama) -- The Bush Administration is comfortable with Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as the next in line to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohammad, says the US ambassador to Malaysia, Marie T. Huhtala.

She said the US was equally happy with Abdullah's leadership and did not foresee any problems during the transition of power before October next year.

"Abdullah is a strong leader...we know both of them (Mahathir and Abdullah) well and are comfortable with them," she told reporters after attending a luncheon talk on "Enhancing US-Malaysia Business, Trade and Investment Relations" here today. The luncheon was organised by the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM).

Responding to questions on Dr Mahathir's retirement plan, she said the decision would not have any impact on the US-Malaysia relationship and expected it to be continue strongly regardless of the changes the Malaysian government may make.

"Relationships between countries are even more than between individuals," she said.

Huhtala said Dr Mahathir's visit to the White House last month had strengthened the relationship between the two countries.

She also said there would not be any negative impact on their bilateral relationship during the transition period.

"I think they (Mahathir and Abdullah) are very responsible and taking the right decision for the country," she said.

On the rumours that US companies in Malaysia were relocating their operations to China, she said she was not aware of any specific instances.

"We are not leaving Malaysia and I'm not seeing it at all. What's happening now is that companies from different countries are moving into China and it's natural for us also to do the same," she added. -- BERNAMA

DC SHY