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US-Malaysia
US COMFORTABLE WITH ABDULLAH, SAYS US AMBASSADOR

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 Mohamad, US Ambassador to Malaysia Marie T. Huhtala said today.

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

"Abdullah is a strong leader...we know both of them (Dr 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. The luncheon was organised by the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM).

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

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

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

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

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

On rumours that US companies in Malaysia were relocating their operations to China, she said that 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 RM