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USA-Malaysia

M'SIA AND USA TIES UNAFFECTED BY SYTRONG STAND AGAINST WAR

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 27 (Bernama) -- The diplomatic relations between the United States and Malaysia will not be affected by Malaysians' strong stand against war, US ambassador to Malaysia Marie Huhtala said today.

"No, it has not hurt our diplomatic relationship. One of the big parts of my job is to inform Washington about the views here, not only the official view expressed by your government but also by the people of Malaysia. We have been very busy sending that word to Washington," she told a news conference here in conjunction with her first visit to Sabah.

About 200,000 Malaysians led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had gathered at a peace rally in Bukit Jalil last Sunday to send a message to the world that they are against aggression and any brutality of war.

Dr Mahathir had also made a strong speech at the opening of the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Kuala Lumpur on Monday to outlaw war.

On the embassy's travel warning on the region, Huhtala said that it was constantly reviewed and the embassy was having constant dialogue with Washington about the need for such travel advisory.

"I look forward to the time that we are able to say that we no longer need to warn Americans about going to Sipadan (Island) because it is one of the most beautiful diver sites in the world," she said

She also said that Sabah was singled out in the travel advisory issued after the bombing in Bali last year because of the kidnapping of a group of tourists by Abu Sayyaf guerillas in Sipadan in 2000 and the possibility of a recurrence.

The travel advisory was not to warn US citizens where not to go but to provide information that the embassy had about any potential danger, she said.

She said that during her visit here, she had found that Sabah was a beautiful state with a cutting edge in terms of adventure and eco-tourism as well as diving and she believed that the number of American tourists would increase once they were exposed to what Sabah could offer.

Asked about potential American investment here, she said that generally, when American companies wanted to locate their offices overseas, they would look for things like good location and incentives from the government as well as affordable utilities.

-- BERNAMA

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