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Hamid-Powell

POWELL AGREES THAT DR MAHATHIR'S OIC SPEECH HAS GOOD IDEAS

By: Arul Rajoo

BANGKOK, Oct 20 (Bernama) -- United States Secretary of State Colin Powell has agreed that the bulk of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's controversial speech at the recent Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit contains "a lot of ideas and good things", said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar here today.

He said Powell had taken the trouble to read the text of the whole speech by the Prime Minister after it had sparked off a lot of adverse reaction worldwide.

"He read Dr Mahathir's (speech) text because it created so much (controversy). But he knows the bulk of it contains good ideas and things that can be done," Syed Hamid said after a 30-minute bilateral meeting with Powell on the sidelines of the 11th Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) Summit here.

In his speech at the OIC Summit in Putrajaya last Thursday, Dr Mahathir had called for an end to all violence and killings, including suicide bombings and massive retaliation, and that Muslims should pause to think before taking further action.

However, his speech, which contained a line which said that "the Jews rule the world by proxy and they got others to fight and die for them" had been distorted by some Western media which portrayed Dr Mahathir as anti-Semitic.

Syed Hamid, however, said that Powell did mention certain portions of Dr Mahathir's speech that had sent signals that led people to react (adversely) and created a lot of apprehension.

"I took the opportunity to explain to him the real situation. I told him to look at the speech as a whole. It was not to create an adverse atmosphere," he added.

In fact, Syed Hamid said he told Powell that Dr Mahathir was also critical of Muslims and had even asked them to look at the achievements of the Jews, and this was something which was also very difficult to ask as well.

Describing his meeting with Powell as "a good meeting", Syed Hamid said it was at the request of Powell after they could not meet at their scheduled meeting in New York earlier this month.

Syed Hamid said he assured the US side that Malaysia's current policies would not change despite changes in its leadership when Dr Mahathir retired on Oct 31 and handed over power to his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"I said this is only a leadership change and not a change of regime. Datuk Seri Abdullah will continue with the current policy. Abdullah is not new and Powell knew him personally," he added.

Earlier at the APEC CEO Summit, Powell spoke about the co-operative efforts between the United States and the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand in fighting terrorism.

-- BERNAMA

AR SHY SRI