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Huhtala-Malaysia

POWER TRANSITION IN M'SIA NOT A GREAT CONCERN TO US - HUHTALA

KUALA LUMPUR, July 14 (Bernama) -- The transition of power from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in October does not pose a great concern to the United States' Government as it believes the change of guard will not create any difficulty.

The US Ambassador to Malaysia, Marie T. Huhtala, said the change of premiership was not something of an odd situation as it was also being practised in many places, including in the US.

"The good relations between the US and Malaysia will be essentially unchanged (after the transition)," she said when delivering a talk on the US Policy in the Post-Iraq Era organised by the Commonwealth Study Conference Association of Malaysia here today.

Huhtala was responding to a question from the floor on US' views on the "regime change" during a question-and-answer session.

She said the US Government would monitor the transition process with great interest and was confident that it would proceed smoothly.

Earlier, in her speech, Huhtala said although there were some areas where the US and the Malaysian Government do not share the same views, the two governments continued to enjoy healthy ties in the economic, security and cultural fields.

She said the US Government lauded the Malaysian Government's move to set up the Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur on July 1.

"We believe this centre will play an important role in strengthening the ability of Asean member nations to fight terrorism, and we look forward to share the experience and expertise we have developed in this critical field," she said.

Huhtala said Malaysia was one of the US' best partners in addressing the terrorism problem in the Southeast Asian region.

"It has done a great job in investigating and arresting members of the Jemaah Islamiyah terror network and other groups that threaten the violent overthrow of local governments," she said.

Responding to a question on the misleading information about deposed Iraqi president Saddam Hussein's attempt to purchase uranium from Niger, Huhtala said it would not be fair to exaggerate on the matter as it had been played up by some political parties in the US.

She said US President George W. Bush had tried his best to perform his duty.

She said the world now faced great challenges in combating terrorism as terrorists in all over the world could create strong networking among them via new technologies such as the internet.

"We cannot return to a simpler time, nor would we want to give up the advantages of modern medicine, the conveniences of modern banking or the efficiencies of modern communications.

"But we have to confront these transnational threats and prevent the misuse of our technology for evil," she added.

-- BERNAMA

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