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Powell-World

POWELL SAYS WORLD NOW MUCH SAFER DESPITE ACTS OF TERRORISM

KUALA LUMPUR, June 16 (bernama) -- Former United States Secretary of State Colin Powell, acknowledging the continuing threat from acts of terrorism, said today the world was now a much safer and stable place to live in than it was a few years ago.

He said the US was not looking for another place to invade and always placed multilateralism as a priority before taking military actions.

"There are fewer wars in the world over the last few years. The world is safer now but we all need to unite against the threat of terrorism," he said at "The Global Leaders Dialogue" at the Palace of Golden Horses near here.

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was a guest of honour at the event which was also attended by former Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

Powell said although acts of terrorism could not change governments or leaders, they could scare people away from a country where the acts occurred.

He reiterated that the steps taken by the US government to deter terrorists, although they might cause inconvenience to non-Americans, were a way to protect Americans and their interest.

However, he agreed that to fight terrorism one must first get to the root cause of the problem and in this case, it was the Palestinian conflict.

"I hope with a new leadership in Palestine this can be achieved. We should not lose the opportunity and the US people and the President should pressure both sides -- Israel and the Palestinians -- to put aside their differences and settle the matter amicably," he added.

Powell said the soft approach -- persuasion and negotiation -- alone was not enough to solve all the conflicts in the world and sometimes the hard approach brought the necessary results.

"When we use the hard approach we must use the soft power after that and this is what the US is doing in Afghanistan," he said.

He said the US approach in dealing with conflict was right and the world, especially Europe, did not need to worry about the breakout of World War Three.

Turning to Asia, he said North Korea and Myanmar's military government were a cause for concern but the US would always use the multilateral approach in dealing with the two states.

Dr Mahathir, in his address, said the Perdana Leadership Foundation of which he is the chairman would organise a conference on peace by the end of this year in Kuala Lumpur.

"We feel that the conference is appropriate because there are too many people living in war and to remind the world that you need not kill to settle issues, which is a primitive way of thinking," he said.

Dr Mahathir said a point of concern was the high number of civilian casualties in Iraq and the emergence of suicide bombers.

"People who become suicide bombers are angry, desperate and oppressed. We should find a way to solve their problem so that the bombing can be stopped," he added.

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