

Anifah Pays Tribute to Obama Over US-ASEAN Engagement

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From Muin Abdul Majid

NEW YORK, Sept 24 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman has paid tribute to United States President Barack Obama for his role in strengthening relations between the US and ASEAN that groups 10 Southeast Asian nations.

The Malaysian top diplomat said Obama was instrumental in the US actively engaging the region again through his 'Pivot to Asia' policy.

Speaking at the informal ASEAN-US Ministers' Meeting here, he said that it was under the president's watch that ASEAN-US Dialogue Relations were elevated to a Strategic Partnership status.

"We hope that his successor will continue to positively and actively engage this region," Anifah said, adding that Obama would be deeply missed among ASEAN circles.

Held on the side-lines of the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly, the meeting was hosted by US Secretary of State John Kerry and the US government.

Anifah said Obama and Kerry's efforts, together with that of ASEAN leaders, had led to the excellent state of ASEAN-US relations seen today.

He said that Malaysia, like all ASEAN members, appreciated the US' role in maintaining peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region.

"We also appreciate the US' constructive role in helping us evolve a regional rules-based regional architecture via ASEAN-led mechanisms, towards a greater sense of ASEAN centrality and unity," the minister said.

He noted that cooperation in regional and international issues, as well as on traditional and non-traditional challenges had continued to deepen to cover myriad issues including terrorism, cyber security, climate change, irregular migrants, maritime matters and others.

"We look forward to working closely with the US to continue enhancing our strategic partnership in all fields of mutual interests," he said.

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