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Clinton-Malaysia
US HAS STRONG STAKE IN MALAYSIA, SAYS CLINTON

By: Salmy Hashim

WASHINGTON, April 20 (Bernama) -- The United States has a strong stake in Malaysia's prosperity and looks forward to building and strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries, President Bill Clinton said.

"Our people-to-people ties are strong and growing with more than 100,000 Malaysians having been educated in American universities.

"Our cooperation on defence and security benefits not just our two nations, but also contributes to peace and security throughout the region," he said in a written response to the remarks of newly-appointed Malaysian Ambassador to the US, Datuk Ghazzali Sheikh Abdul Khalid who presented his credentials to Clinton at the White House here Monday.

"The United States is proud of the positive role that our trade and investment have played in Malaysia's remarkable economic development," Clinton said.

Ghazzali, in his written statement to the president, noted that the United States is Malaysia's largest trading partner and the biggest source of foreign direct investment.

The ambassador said the increasing number of visits by American investors and senior business executives to Malaysia in recent months reflected their growing confidence in the Malaysian economy.

Ghazzali said their renewed confidence was also proof of the effectiveness of the decisive, pragmatic and imaginative measures implemented by the Malaysian government to stimulate economic recovery.

On the new international financial architecture, Ghazzali said that Malaysia was ready to play its part in this important global effort.

"Malaysia fully supports the role of the US in addressing the global financial crisis.

"We believe that with the constructive role of the US, a new financial architecture could be developed to foster stability and reduce systemic risk in the international financial system," the ambassador said.

When asked to describe US-Malaysia relations at this juncture, Ghazzali later told Bernama that while relations between the two countries were sound and strong, the two countries may not see eye-to-eye on several issues.

"It just indicates the intensity of the relationship - we must accept our differences," he said.

Ghazzali said his main mission in the US was to be the bearer of good news on Malaysia because of the dearth of news about the positive developments in Malaysia available to the American businessmen and the general public.

He said there were plenty of negative news about Malaysia in the American media citing Monday's Washington Post editorial condemning Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as a "disgrace" and as a symbol of Malaysia's trouble.

Ghazzali said the editorial, which described Malaysia's economy as "stuck in reverse" was full of factual errors which needed to be corrected.

The ambassador said articles such as these portrayed a negative image of Malaysia to the American public and investors.

The American media needed facts and figures about Malaysia so that they could report in a balanced and fair manner, he added.

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