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Bush and Gore keen on exchanging trade links with Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - United States Vice-President Al Gore and Texas Governor George W. Bush are keen on enhancing trade links with Malaysia and other Asia-Pacific countries.

This is the opinion of two specialists on American politics on the policies to be pursued by either candidate for the presidency.

National Journal contributing editor Jerry Hagstrom said yesterday that although the Clinton administration's foreign policy was seen by some in America to be involved in "relatively small disputes which are not of strategic interest to the country", future policies towards Malaysia would not alter drastically.

"Although the US's involvements in the domestic politics of Haiti and Kosovo were not well received by some quarters back home, I can't foresee Gore making unpopular policies if he wins.

"As for Bush, I feel that he would go along with what the vast majority of Americans want," he said.

Indiana University political science lecturer Dr Gerald Houseman expects both candidates to continue President Bill Clinton's economic policies with regard to Malaysia.

"We have had eight prosperous years under Clinton, and I foresee that his economic policies (towards Malaysia) will be extended in the future," he said.

Asked about Gore's feelings towards Malaysia after walking out of a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the eve of the Apec Summit in 1998, Houseman said:

"I don't foresee that being blown into a major issue. He and Bush will be interested in increasing trade within this region."

Both were asked to comment on issues arising from Malaysia-US ties at a question-and-answer session which followed a special talk entitled "Making Sense Of The US Presidential Election 2000" that was hosted by the US embassy.

Hagstrom and Houseman agree that regardless of who wins the election, the American people will unite and rally around the new President.

"If the American electorate feels that the election results are not right, or if the winner becomes unpopular during his tenure, the American people will not vote for him in the next election in 2004," said Hagstrom.

On the controversy surrounding the Electoral College in this elections, Houseman feels that amending America's 200-year-old constitution would be "a long and difficult process".

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