

US praises M'sia for role in war against terror

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Official: We're pleased with response

■ By JOCELINE TAN

KUALA LUMPUR: Relations between the United States and Malaysia have been on a positive footing since the events of Sept 11, Gene B. Christy, a top official of the US State Department in Washington DC said yesterday.

He said Malaysia's response to the attacks on the United States had been positively noted and there has been respect and admiration for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's stand and co-operation on the issue of international terrorism.

"He understood what the events of Sept 11 meant. His response to the terrorist incident, his recognition of the implications of that event was respected and admired (in the US).

"We have seen that Malaysia has taken a number of steps to deal with the international terrorist threat. In

that respect, the Malaysian response and the Prime Minister get the credit."

Christy, who is director for the Office of Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Borneo and Singapore Affairs, said the United States was just as pleased as Malaysia over the outcome of the meeting between President George W. Bush and Dr Mahathir when both men met at the Apec meeting in Shanghai.

"The results have been obvious. First, a very good telephone conversation at the beginning of October that ultimately led to the conversation in Shanghai."

Christy is on a familiarisation tour of the region. Prior to his current appointment, he was in charge of the Malaysia Desk in Washington DC and has also been a political councillor at the US Embassy here in the early 1990s.

He said there is now a great deal of interest in the United States about the evolu-

tion of political Islam and also its implications for international security and the advancement of American interests.

"It's of interest to scholars as well as something that is happening, so you want to learn as much about it as possible."

He indicated that there is also greater consciousness about Islam and Muslims in America. But the knowledge is uneven, ranging from those who understood that the US attacks were not the work of Islamic terrorists but people who happen to be Muslims, to the less enlightened who are out to confuse the whole concept of religion.

Asked about political Islam in Malaysia and the growth of the PAS, he said Malaysia was a democratic country and people had the opportunity to vote the way they wanted.

"It is not United States policy to tell Malaysians you have made the wrong choice," he said.