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New era in Malaysia-US ties

THERE has always been a reservoir of goodwill in the relations between Malaysia and the US, especially at the people-to-people and business levels. But the commonalities between the two countries were over-shadowed in recent years by the cooling of political and diplomatic ties.

However, we can now safely put the strains in our relationship behind us and move forward to warmer ties that should continue to improve and strengthen.

The meeting in Shanghai between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and US President George W. Bush is a clear signal that Malaysia and the US have now entered a new era.

As a moderate Islamic nation, Malaysia has a role to play in the war against terrorism. Dr Mahathir has stressed that to be successful in the fight against international terrorism, the root causes must be removed, especially the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people.

The creation of a separate Palestinian state would dramatically reduce the anger and hatred among Muslims against the US. This view has now been accepted by the US as essential to building a lasting peace in the Middle East.

Like the US, Malaysia is also a working democracy but it has been criticised for having laws that it considers necessary to allow preventive detentions of subversive elements in the larger interest of the majority. We have been vindicated in the wake of the terrorist attacks in the US and the US now understands why Malaysia, because of its counter-insurgency experience, still advocates preventive detentions.

The already strong presence of American companies in Malaysia can be expected to strengthen further with the warming of bilateral Malaysia-US ties. We have always welcomed, and appreciated, the technology and management expertise of US multinationals which have invested billions of dollars in Malaysia's electronics industry. We hope to see more American investments in future and its wider participation in Malaysia's K-economy.

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