

# Ling hails Dr M's visit as historic

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to the United States this week has been hailed as historic, meaningful and the beginning of a fruitful relationship.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said Washington had finally come to realise that Dr was "a very good friend and ally".

He said the fact that President George W. Bush had invited the Prime Minister to the White House spoke volumes of the former's intention to forge a deeper friendship.

"Dr Mahathir and Bush have got along very well with deeper understanding and appreciation of each other.

"This will pave way for a much closer and better relationship. If two top leaders get along very well, the two nations will follow suit," he said after a briefing session for Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin who made a one-day working visit to the Transport Ministry.

According to US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly, Bush had invited Dr Mahathir to Washington "to say thank you to a respected leader for a very stirring response in a global campaign against terror".

In his greetings to the US-Asean Business Council dinner in honour of Dr Mahathir on Wednesday, Bush said the two countries enjoyed excellent bilateral ties, including robust economic relations, defence partnership and strong co-operation in combating terrorism.

Meanwhile, Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said the visit had finally been given recognition for Malaysia's position and achievements.

"Malaysians should be proud of this," he said after a handing over ceremony of two Ministry of International Trade and Industry RosettaNet grants to two Penang-based companies.

Koh said the long overdue recognition accorded by Bush to Malaysia would continue to boost the "already improving" trade and investment climate between the two countries.

The Prime Minister's speeches in the US, added Koh, reflected the "Malaysian Formula" which highlighted the country's stand and forward progress and the ability of its people of various backgrounds to work together.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting congratulated Dr Mahathir for getting the US to acknowledge Malaysia's efforts in fighting terrorism.

He said America now respected Malaysia's stand on Palestine and other Southeast Asian issues.

He said it was the first time in many years that there had been such a good relationship between the two countries.

International Movement For A Just World president Dr Chandra Muzaffar said Bush should come to grips with the basic issues involved in the fight against terrorism.

He said this was shown in Bush's remarks to the media when he welcomed Dr Mahathir to the Oval Office on Tuesday.

"Bush stated that a sense of hopelessness could breed terrorism and suggested that education and health care are important in making people feel that they have a future.

"He should realise that not just hopelessness but also powerlessness can give rise to frustration and despair which in turn may induce people to turn to acts of terror to achieve their goals."

Chandra said nothing had made the vast majority of humankind feel so utterly powerless and hopeless in the last few decades than an overwhelmingly hegemonic global system, dominated by the elites of Washington.