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# Bush: M'sia a beacon of hope

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## US president expresses his admiration for Pak Lah's leadership

**KUALA LUMPUR:** US President George W. Bush congratulated Malaysians as the nation celebrated 50 years of independence, saying that the country has become a beacon of hope.

In a statement released by the US Embassy here yesterday, Bush said: "Aug 31 is an historic day for East Asian democracy.

"Fifty years ago, a young democracy came into being on the Malayan peninsula. To secure its freedom, the people had to defeat a communist insurgency and chart a course that gave all its people equal rights.

"That democracy, like so many in East Asia, has flourished based on principles of respect for the rights of all in society, regardless of ethnicity or religious belief.

"Malaysia today is a prosperous nation, and a beacon of hope," Bush said.

In Washington, Bush described Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's leadership as a very constructive force for South-East Asia.

In a rare roundtable on Thursday with five journalists from the Asia Pacific, including Bernama, Bush said Malaysia was an interesting

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PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

example of how a free society could deal with movements that could conceivably change and alter the

nature of free society.

"I respect the way the Prime Minister has used freedom and the openness of society to deal with frustration.

"I mean, all societies have frustrated people. The question is: Will the outlet of that frustration lead to violence or peace?" Bush said.

"Malaysia is an example of a country where frustrations have been channelled in a positive way. I respect Prime Minister Abdullah, admire his leadership," Bush said when commenting on Abdullah's leadership in handling extremism

and terrorism in the country.

Abdullah is a proponent for moderation, advocating Islam Hadhari (Civilisational Islam) in Malaysia and everywhere he goes.

Bush said he looked forward to continuing meaningful discussions on the bilateral free trade agreement with the United States' 10th largest trading partner.

The two countries are negotiating a free trade agreement. Talks have hit a snag over financial services, intellectual property, competition policies, government procurement and labour. — Bernama