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United States President Barack Obama, flanked by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Hajah Haminah, taking a commemorative picture at the state dinner at Istana Negara yesterday. With them are (from left) Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, prime minister's wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and Muhyiddin's wife Puan Sri Noorainee Abdul Rahman. Bernama pic

'Different but with same hopes'

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DRAWING STRENGTH: Both nations want to leave a better tomorrow, says US leader

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UNITED States President Barack Obama says the US and Malaysia can draw strength from their ethnic and religious diversity and hope from history to carve a brighter future for the next generation.

In his remarks at a state banquet at Istana Negara last night, Obama said while the US and Malaysia might be different as nations, their people shared similar hopes and aspirations.

"I believe that whether we come from a remote village or a big city, whether we live in the US or in Malaysia, we all share basic human aspirations — to live in dignity and peace. (We want) to shape our own

destiny, to be able to make a living and to work hard and support a family. And most of all, to leave the next generation something better than what was left to us."

At the banquet graced by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Hajah Haminah, Obama said these were the aspirations that could illuminate a new era of partnership between the US and Malaysia.

He expressed gratitude to Malaysia for hosting his visit and recalled the inaugural visit by the 36th American president, Lyndon B. Johnson, some 50 years ago.

Obama said Johnson was impressed with the Malaysian people's tenacity to develop the country.

"He was impressed with the extraordinary vitality and eagerness



he saw on the faces of the people of Southeast Asia.

Turning to Najib, he said: "Mr Prime Minister, I look forward to our work together, and I pledge to infuse our efforts with that same spirit.

"Tonight, I simply want to express my gratitude for the generosity that you've shown us today — a generosity the people of Malaysia have extended to my family since I was elected (as president)."

The American president sprinkled his remarks with a few Malay words, a gesture that was well received by

the audience as shown by their appreciative applause.

At the start of the speech, he wished those present *selamat petang* (good evening) and ended it with *terima kasih banyak* (thank you very much).

In between, he used the word *bekerjasama* when touching on the partnership between the US and Malaysia, as well as the *boleh* spirit in reference to the *Malaysia Boleh* mantra, which loosely translates into "Malaysia can do it".

Obama also thanked Malaysia for displaying some of his late mother Stanley Ann Dunham's artwork at the Islamic Arts Museum two years ago.

"My mother loved batik. I remember when I was a boy growing up in Jakarta, she'd come home from the village markets with her arms full of batik and she'd lay them around the house and look at them, and make dresses out of them," he said.

In his royal address, the king reciprocated Obama's gratitude by acknowledging unwavering US support and cooperation in the search

for the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong said the assistance rendered summarised the close bond between the two countries.

"Your involvement since the beginning of the search and rescue mission, and ongoing recovery operation, has indeed exemplified the strong commitment established between our two countries," he said.

Present at the banquet were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, and Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, wife Puan Sri Noorainee Abdul Rahman and cabinet ministers.

The king was also pleased with the flourishing ties between Malaysia and US over the years.

He said the strong economic ties forged between Malaysia and the US would spur the country's growth to be a developed nation by 2020. He added that Malaysia would continue to build a lasting relationship with the US to strengthen mutual stability and prosperity.