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Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** receiving a courtesy call from United States Secretary of State **John Kerry** in Perdana Putra, Putrajaya, yesterday. Bernama pic

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## Kerry: US, Asean future is linked

KUALA LUMPUR: United States Secretary of State John Kerry said the future of Asean and the US is interconnected, and that the regional bloc and Washington share many interests.

Speaking at the US-Asean Ministerial Meeting here yesterday, which is part of the 48th Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Kerry said the US wanted Asean to remain a key part of the Asia-Pacific multilateral architecture.

"Asean is essential to upholding the rules-based system in Asia and to ensure that all countries have a say in how we address shared challenges, including economic development,

marine conservation, climate change and human trafficking."

He said Washington shared Asean's vision for "a stable, peaceful and prosperous region that respects the rule of law and safeguards universal human rights".

"Working together, (we) can make a difference to all of our citizens in every single one of the countries.

"And that is why we are supporting the Asean Economic Community, which will help to sustain prosperity in this dynamic region and to generate jobs for people in all of our countries."

Kerry said Washington recognised the economic dynamism of the re-

gion, but realised that for growth to be sustainable, it had to be inclusive and respectful.

He said strengthening ties with Asean was a critical part of President Barack Obama's rebalance initiative.

"Believe me, we are absolutely convinced of this, that much of the history of the 21st century will be written right here in this region."

Later, Kerry paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at his office in Putrajaya.

Kerry was accompanied by US Ambassador to Malaysia Joseph Yun and National Security Council Senior Director for Asia Daniel Kritenbrink.