

## **Malaysia leaves a lasting impression on US senators**

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KUALA LUMPUR: Veteran American senators John McCain and Joseph Lieberman, who are the first members of the Senate to come to Malaysia in a long time, said they were impressed with the country.

McCain said Malaysia, being a Muslim nation that embraced free enterprise, democracy and showing amazing progress economically, could be a model to the rest of the world.

"We are very impressed by the entrepreneurship, free enterprise system and the economic development that we have observed," he told a joint press conference with Lieberman here yesterday.

McCain, who was the Republican candidate for the 2008 US election, said they had the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, business leaders and civil society leaders.

For Independent Senator Lieberman, the three-day visit which ends today, at the invitation of the Kuala Lumpur Business Club, had been excellent.

"The relationships between the two countries are undergoing a great time. There is a certain naturalness to the increasing good relations because we are both a diverse country, diverse politically and committed to democracy," he added.

McCain said during their meeting with government and opposition leaders the forthcoming general election issues were discussed.

"We look forward to a fair and free election here. We know there are number of issues surrounding the elections that are now being debated by opposition and government authorities.

"But we also applaud the fact that there is an election coming up and we will do everything we can to assist," McCain added.

Lieberman hoped the government would be willing to allow international observers for the election, adding that this would be a sign of confidence of a political system.

"I am encouraged to believe in the discussion we had with the government yesterday that (this) might be possible and I appreciate that greatly."

When asked to comment on the democratic progress made in Malaysia, Lieberman noted that the government under Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak had been on the road to reform.

"It is a fact that America's relations with Malaysia have improved under Najib.

"But this does not mean that this government cannot improve on the road to democracy," he said.

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