

**By : DATUK SERI SYED HAMID ALBAR**  
**Venue : WISMA PUTRA**  
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**Title : MEETING WITH CHIEFS OF STAFF TO US CONGRESSMEN**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

1. I would like to warmly welcome all of you to Wisma Putra, Putra Jaya and indeed to Malaysia.

2. Before I proceed any further, allow me to introduce to you the senior officials of my ministry namely: -

Ambassador Dato' Ahmad Fuzi Razak  
Secretary General

Ambassador Dato' Abdul Aziz Mohamed  
Deputy Secretary General I

Ambassador S. Thanarajasingam  
Under Secretary for American Affairs

Mr. Shahrul Ikram  
Principal Assistant Secretary for American Affairs, and

Ms. Nadzirah Osman  
Assistant Secretary for American Affairs

3. I am grateful to the CEO of ISIS, Tan Sri Noordin Sopie; Director General of ISIS, Dato' Jawhar and their senior officials and staff for arranging this visit.

4. This is the third time I am meeting in Kuala Lumpur with a group of congressional staffers organized by ISIS.

5. I believe that these visits, especially by people who work on the Hill, are useful towards increasing the understanding of Malaysia and towards strengthening the overall bilateral relations between Malaysia and the US.

6. ISIS has drawn up an interesting programme, which within the limited time you have in Malaysia, will give you an idea of what Malaysia and Malaysians are like.

7. It is also my honest hope that after this visit, you not only would have very pleasant recollections, but more importantly would have a better appreciation and understanding of Malaysia.

8. I am aware that all of you have had a long flight and may not be inclined to hearing long speeches. I assure you that I have no such intentions either.

9. I found from my previous meetings with congressional staffers, that the session becomes lively during Q&A.

10. Before we begin the Q&A session, let me make the following points:-

- Malaysia is a small, developing, multiracial, multi-religious country committed to democracy, the rule of law, promotion of comprehensive human rights and development.
- Islam is the official religion with the majority of Malaysians being muslim. At the same time, the rights of all Malaysians, muslim and non-muslim alike, are guaranteed by the constitution.
- Given our population composition and our geographical location, Malaysians are moderate and tolerant and value social harmony.
- We seek peace, security and justice and have consistently sought to improve ties with all countries.
- Peace, growth and stability in our immediate region is of vital importance to us.
- We are a business friendly government which practiced privatization, well before the term came into vogue.
- We are a trading nation depending on the well being of the world. In this regard a rule-based trading system which takes into account the interest of all countries is vital for our continued well being.

11. As for relations with the US, I must underline that we attach high priority to our relations with the US. There are shared values and perceptions. Malaysia-US relations are mutually beneficial.

12. It is true that sometimes Malaysia may not share the same perception and position on some issues, such as the sanction against Iraq, but this in no way implies that we are opposed to the US or are anti-US. We believe in articulating a principled position and we believe that even friends can differ.

13. Overall, bilateral relations between Malaysia and the US have improved significantly since the September 11 incident, after some "bumpy rides" during the Clinton Administration. The Shanghai Meeting between both Prime Minister Mahathir and President Bush during the recent APEC Summit meeting tremendously helped strengthen ties.

14. On critical issues, such as the invasion of Kuwait, Malaysia supported the US when it was a non-permanent member of the Security Council. Similarly, on the terrorist attacks against the US, we have condemned it unequivocally and pledged to work with the US. Three Malaysians lost their lives at the World Trade Center.

15. We do not harbour terrorist nor do we provide any safe havens in any forms.

16. We do get exasperated when we get a bad press, which often is deliberately designed to mislead, if not to create mischief. In a world driven by soundbytes and instant messages these irresponsible reports have damaging effects and are costly to repair.

17. On the issue of terrorism, Malaysia believes that acts of terrorism should be viewed as a crime against humanity and that the issue should be handled without any nations taking sides.

18. Particularly after the September 11 attacks, there is need for greater understanding between the industrialized democracies and Islamic countries. I feel that Malaysia as a moderate Islamic country with an established democracy focusing on economic development, science and technology, inter religious and inter racial tolerance, could play a "bridging role".

Closing

19. Again I would like to reiterate that Malaysia is a friend of the US. We do not think that a country that allows the US ships to call on its ports, has excellent relations in the fields of trade, economy, investment, education, defence, etc. is not friendly to the US. If some of our positions or opinions differ from that of the US, it only reflects our principled stance. I also feel that Malaysia under the present government led by Prime Minister Mahathir, has always been the voice of moderation among Islamic countries. I do not think other political parties in Malaysia would take similar positions if they come into power.

Thank you and I now open the floor for the Q&A session.