

Fireside Chat with US Ambassador, HE James Keith, 26 November 2008

Dear Members

The Fireside Chat held with HE James Keith, US Ambassador last week at Carcosa Seri Negara, was a great success, due to the overwhelming support and participation of KLBC members. At the event, members had the opportunity to not only network amongst friends but also obtain very specific information on key issues and concerns regarding where the US is headed under the administration of President Barack Obama.

HE James Keith opened the session "A New President- a New Era?" by providing timely insight into US foreign policy, going forward. For those who were unable to attend the session, we append a short take on the salient points of what was discussed.

In noting that there is presently a transition team handling the fort before President elect Barack Obama takes office on 20 January 2009, it was pointed out that no real action on major issues/foreign policy would thus be taken during this period; this includes the US Malaysia FTA negotiations.

In terms of general direction, HE James Keith stated that the new administration seems to want to administer from the centre, with no leaning towards left or right wings and that policy would be driven by a realist and pragmatist standpoint, based on having a just society. Barack Obama believes in shared leadership (and therefore shared burdens as well) on issues such as global trade, nuclear disarmament, Intellectual Property rights, etc. In short, shared decision making would also equate to taking responsibility for decisions.

Priorities of the new administration would include countering terrorism, managing the economic environment (to contain issues and invest in the future) and issues related to energy, environment and improved international cooperation.

HE James Keith said that there is notwithstanding the US unemployment rate, he does not expect to see any protectionist moves in terms of manpower outsourcing.

In the spirit of shared global leadership, the new administration is keen to work with China and India as the world's largest engines of growth, towards world economic stability. HE James Keith also noted that there will also be a shifting of gears, a new way of thinking, in respect to Islamic issues.

This essentially summarises the discussions held at the Fireside Chat with the US Ambassador last week. Once again, our sincere gratitude to all members who participated and we look forward to having more members participate at the next event.

Thank you.