



Loke (left) and Kagan at the US Independence Day event in Kuala Lumpur.

US-Malaysia relations hailed

Guests celebrate early Fourth of July at sports-themed event in Kuala Lumpur

By **EDWARD RAJENDRA**
edward@thestar.com.my

THE United States' Independence Day celebration in Kuala Lumpur was a grand affair.

Held ahead of the July 4 celebration, the US embassy reception at a hotel welcomed 600 guests, among them representatives of the Malaysian government, foreign heads of mission as well as business leaders from the US and local companies.

This year marks the 248th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence and establishment of the United States of America.

Guest of honour Transport Minister Anthony Loke, who represented the Malaysian government, was welcomed by US Ambassador to Malaysia Edgard D. Kagan, who was hosting his first independence day celebration in Malaysia.

Both Loke and Kagan were escorted by US Marine Corps personnel to the stage, where they toasted to the prosperity and well-being of both governments and countries.

The national anthems of both country were played.

Guests clapped and cheered when US embassy staff Sgt Alonzo Longstreet cut a cake to mark the anniversary.

The celebrations were unique in its sports theme, with a digital backdrop carrying the flags of both countries with silhouettes of athletes.

"Sports has the power to bring people together and it is something we have seen. There is so much shared passion in both our countries," Kagan said.

"Sports really brings out the best in all of us. There are moments of joy and there are moments of disappointment, where you can pick yourself up and hope the team you are supporting does better the next time."

Kagan emphasised how he and his colleagues were building on the strong groundwork of US-Malaysia relations.

"Our ties are really good and by working together, we can make it even better," said Kagan, adding that an improved



US Marine Corps personnel heralding the entry of Kagan and Loke.

partnership would provide greater support and benefit to the people in both countries.

Guests enjoyed stage performances by Orkestra Kuala Lumpur Combo Band under Kuala Lumpur City Hall. Vocalist of the six-piece band Noor Hazril Mohd Sidek, fondly known as Oyent Hazryl, belted out songs like *Belaian Jiwa*, *Englishman in New York*, *Fly Me to the Moon* and *Take Me Home, Country Roads* that thrilled the crowd.

The event laid out a spread of American food featuring regional favourites such as mid-Atlantic buffalo wings, buffalo chicken tenders, barbecued beef brisket and desserts such as mudslide ice cream, apple pie and key lime pie.

Guests also had the chance to check out Harley Davidson motorcycles and Tesla cars.