

Hamid: US visit will boost ties

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to the US from May 13-15 augurs well for both countries in the political, economic, social and cultural fields.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said although there was no specific agenda, Dr Mahathir and the US President George W. Bush are expected to discuss improving bilateral ties.

"They' will also be discussing regional and international issues among which would be ways to tackle terrorism and the Palestinian issue," he said.

Apart from meeting Bush, Dr Mahathir is scheduled to meet other senior members of the Bush administration.

Syed Hamid said the three-day meeting would enable the two leaders to discuss matters of mutual interest which would enhance

and ensure continuity in the increasing good bilateral ties between the two countries.

Syed Hamid was speaking after launching the "Spiritual Edifices of Islam" exhibition at the Islamic Arts Museum here.

Also present at the exhibition was the US ambassador to Malaysia, Marie Huhtala who said Bush had invited Dr Mahathir to the US because "the relationship between the two countries is getting to be very good and very close."

"We particularly appreciate Malaysia's strong co-operation in fighting terrorism and it is a strong ally in the global struggle against intolerance. My Government appreciates the support."

On the exhibition, she said it came at an appropriate time which would help showcase how Islam was flourishing in the US.

"Islam is now America's fastest

growing faith, with more than six million living in the US."

Huhtala said Bush in his Hari Raya Aidilfitri greetings this year had said: "The varied ways in which Muslims contribute to American life across the US are powerful reminders that ethnic and racial differences need not divide us when we share common values and purposes. By building strong foundations of mutual respect, we can achieve peace and reconciliation in our world."

The exhibition, which opened today and ends in July, displays 33 drawings of mosques around the world including the Kampong Kling Mosque in Malacca which was built in 1748.

The drawings were done by the late Arabic-American Wahbi Al-Hariri Rifai and the collection was brought to Malaysia by his son Dr Mokhless Al-Hariri Rifai.