

Malaysia and US to sign anti-terror **declaration**

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WASHINGTON: Malaysia and the United States will sign a declaration to combat international terrorism during Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit here which begins today.

Foreign Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar said yesterday that the declaration pledged joint action to combat the menace.

Syed Hamid will sign for Malaysia while acting State Secretary Richard Armitage will sign for the United States.

In a briefing to reporters, he said Malaysia would co-operate in efforts to eliminate international terrorism.

He said such co-operation was vital, given the global nature of the problems.

Syed Hamid said the Prime

Minister's visit was to further strengthen bilateral ties between the two countries in the fields of defence, investments and trading and the fight against terrorism.

He said the relations were strained in the last few years but had improved since the two leaders met in Shanghai.

"Dr Mahathir's working visit here is a reflection of the good relations and is aimed at strengthening their personal ties and that of the two countries," he said.

Syed Hamid said that Dr Mahathir would also bring up the Palestinian problem and the situation in the Middle East.

He said Malaysia's stand was that violence on both sides would not solve the problem and what was needed was a political situation.

He said Malaysia, which was a moderate Islamic country, would have the opportunity to give its views on the Saudi peace plan.

The Prime Minister will also discuss issues relating to the Asean region and witness the launching of the Malaysia Trade, Economic and Security Caucus, which will be used as a mechanism to convey the correct information on Malaysia to the American network. Dr Mahathir is expected to have a full schedule of meetings during his two days.

Among those he will meet will be Vice-President Dick Cheney and National Security Advisor Condeleezza Rice. He will open the new Malaysian Embassy as well as meet about 150 Malaysian students studying along the East Coast.