

# Chirac's visit will enhance ties, says Wisma Putra

KUALA LUMPUR: French President Jacques Chirac's brief visit to Malaysia today will be significant as it allows him to discuss bilateral and international issues at length with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Malaysia-France relations have always been close, which have been further enriched by the strong bond of friendship between Mahathir and Chirac, both at official and personal levels, Wisma Putra said in a statement yesterday.

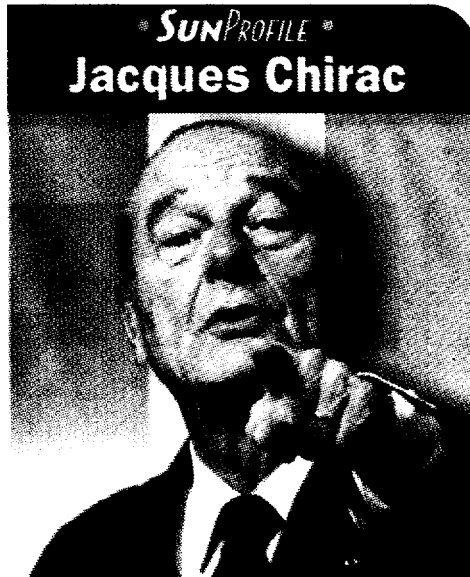
Both countries were opposed to waging war on Iraq.

According to Wisma Putra, Chirac will also hold talks with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Chirac will be accompanied by Minister of Overseas Department and Territories, Brigitte Girardin, and nine senior officials.

His visit is in response to the invitation by Mahathir. Bilateral trade between the two countries has been on the uptrend, with total bilateral trade last year valued at RM9.43 billion, and for the first time the balance of trade was in Malaysia's favour.

In the area of defence, Malaysia signed an agreement with France last year to purchase two new Scorpene submarines. The first submarine is due for delivery in 2007.



● **President of the French Republic:**

Since May 7, 1995.

● **Born:** November 29, 1932 in Pans.

● **Education:** Graduated from the Lycee Carnot and Lycee Louis-le-Grand with honours in 1950, Institute of Political Science in Pans in 1953 and Harvard University Summer School in America in the same year. He graduated from the Ecole Nationale d'administration in 1959.

● **Religion:** Roman Catholic.

● **Military Service:** French Army 1954 to 1957. Chirac began his career at the National School of Administration from 1957 to 1959, after which he was made auditor of the state audit court.

● **Political career and post held:** Town councillor, state secretary for social affairs, state secretary for economy and finance, minister delegate of the prime ministers office, agriculture and rural development minister, interior minister, mayor of Pans, and prime minister. Elected as member of the European parliament in June 1979 (on the defence of French interests in Europe list) but resigned seat in 1980.

● **Family:** Married Bernadette Chodron de Coucel on March 16, 1956. They have two daughters.