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Taking ties with US to a new level

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SUMMIT: Najib, Obama and other Asean leaders to focus on 'strategic partnership'

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will be in the United States from today until Feb 17 for a working visit.

A Foreign Affairs Ministry statement said the highlight of the trip would be the Asean-US Leaders' Summit on Feb 15 and 16 at Sunnylands in California.

The summit is convened following an invitation from US President Barack Obama during the 3rd Asean-US Summit held here in November, and marks the elevation of ties between the regional bloc and Washington to a strategic partnership.

The ministry said the Sunnylands event would serve as an ideal venue for Asean and US leaders to engage in formal and informal exchanges on Asean-US cooperation and other regional and international issues.

"All participating leaders are expected to issue an outcome document highlighting the agreed principles between the region and the US in bringing forward the

dialogue relations under the new strategic partnership.

"The summit will be divided into two sessions; the first one will focus on promoting an innovative, entrepreneurial Asean Economic Community.

"The second session will be covering issues pertaining to peace, prosperity, and security in the Asia-Pacific region," it said in a statement.

Najib will be accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed.

Apart from the summit, the prime minister is also scheduled to meet the Malaysian diaspora and students in Los Angeles.

Najib will also travel to San Francisco, where he will attend a roundtable meeting with fund managers, meet with captains of industry, as well as visit Apple Inc and Tesla Motors.

"Malaysia and the US continue to enjoy close and cordial bilateral relations in key areas of cooperation, including politics, economy, defence and security," the ministry said.

Total bilateral trade between the two countries from January to November last year was valued at US\$30.24 billion (RM124.5 billion).

That is an increase of 10.6 per cent from the same period in 2014, the ministry said.

"The US was Malaysia's fourth largest trading partner in 2014."