

Headline	Mosque visit shows willingness to forge ties		
MediaTitle	New Straits Times		
Date	28 Apr 2014	Language	English
Circulation	95,860	Readership	236,000
Section	Local News	Color	Black/white
Page No	12	ArticleSize	123 cm ²
AdValue	RM 2,006	PR Value	RM 6,018



Mosque visit 'shows willingness to forge ties'

KUALA LUMPUR: United States President Barack Obama's visit to Masjid Negara is a reflection of Washington's acceptance of Islamic nations as well as its willingness to forge ties with moderate Muslim countries.

Analysts believe that the US president's visit could also lead to greater development for Muslim countries in the future.

Describing it as a win-win situation for the US and Islam, Universiti Utara Malaysia political analyst Associate Professor Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani said it could prove advantageous on many fronts.

"Apart from boosting the US' image as a nation that is ready to work with all religions, including Islam, which is Malaysia's official religion, the visit has also debunked the notion that Islam is closely linked to terrorism," he said, adding that it would also strengthen bilateral bonds between both nations.

Political analyst Professor Dr Mohd Adnan Hashim concurred and noted that Obama's visit could be of great significance.

"Granted, it could just be a visit. However, it could be also interpreted as the US' tolerance towards Muslim nations.

"It also acknowledges that Islam is a religion that adopts a friendly policy regardless of race and religion."

International Movement for a Just World president Dr Chandra Muzaffar hoped that the visit could lead to greater developments for Islam in the future.

Former Masjid Negara imam Datuk Hassan Mahmood Al-Hafiz said Obama's visit could correct the wrong perception of Islam.

"I hope that from his visit, the US president can view for himself the beauty of Islam and that it is a religion that promotes peace."

Obama, who is on a three-day visit to Malaysia, visited the mosque yesterday. He had also made a brief stop at the Warriors' Mausoleum, located next to the mosque.