

A MODEL FOR SETTLING CLAIMS

By NIZAM ISA

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysia-Thailand Production Sharing Contract will be a model for settling any overlapping claims over petroleum and gas resources.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the contract was a novel and pragmatic approach towards sharing of resources in the spirit of neighbourliness and friendship.

Dr Mahathir said the idea was mooted 15 years ago by former Prime Minister Tun Hussein Onn and his Thai counterpart General Kriangsak Chomanan when they signed a memorandum of understanding for the setting up of the Malaysia-Thailand Joint Authority (MTJA).

"This MOU was visionary even then, reflecting the foresight and the political will of our leaders at that time," he said after witnessing the signing of the production sharing contract between Petronas Cari-gali, PTTEP International Limited and Triton Oil Company of Thailand yesterday.

Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, who was here on a one-day working visit, witnessed the signing of the contract.

The agreement allows the three oil companies to explore for and exploit hydrocarbons in the 7,250 sq km joint development area in the Gulf of Thailand, which has been the subject of overlapping claims by both the Malaysian and Thai governments.

Dr Mahathir also hoped the co-operation would boost development of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle.

"We can also look towards broadening our co-operation in many other fields that will bring a lot of benefit to our peoples as well as contribute towards a peaceful, prosperous and stable South-East Asia," he said.

In his speech, Chuan said the signing of the contract was a testimony to a long and fruitful relationship between Malaysia and Thailand.

"This is our genuine pursuit for neighbourliness and the people's pursuit for mutual prosperity towards further develop-

ment of the region," he said.

At the signing ceremony, MTJA was represented by its chief executive officer Charu-Udom Ruangsuvan, PTTEP by its chairman Viset Choopiban, Petronas Cari-gali by its managing director Datuk Moha-

mad Idris Mansor and Triton Oil Company by its president Thomas G. Finck.

Prior to the ceremony, the two prime ministers jointly opened the MTJA headquarters on the 27th floor of Empire Tower in Jalan Tun Razak, here.