

14 NOV 1996

MAHATHIR, RAMOS TO HOLD TALKS

MANILA, Nov 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will hold bilateral talks with President Fidel Ramos prior to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit on Nov 25, an official said today.

Foreign Undersecretary Rodolfo Severino told a press briefing that the talks, set for Nov 23, will be held in Manila, one of the summit's two main venues. The other is Subic freeport in Olongapo city, northwest of Manila.

Dr Mahathir and Ramos are among 18 Asia-Pacific heads of state who will attend the summit, the biggest international event the Philippines will host this year. The summit will be preceded by the APEC senior officials meeting.

Severino said Dr Mahathir, who will be accompanied by ranking Malaysian officials, will be the first among the APEC heads of state to arrive in Manila on the morning of Nov 23.

Aside from the bilateral talks with Ramos, Dr Mahathir will also address the APEC Business Forum in the afternoon of the same day which will be attended by the region's business leaders.

Severino declined to disclose the agenda of the Mahathir-Ramos meeting but said it formed part of efforts by the two Asean leaders to forge closer bilateral relations.

He said President Ramos will also hold talks with other APEC leaders on Nov 24, a day before the summit in Subic freeport.

They include US President Bill Clinton, Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, South Korean President Kim Young-sam, Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, Indonesian President Suharto, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Sir Julius Chan of Papua New Guinea and Chilean President Eduardo Fre Ruiz-Tagle.

Other leaders Ramos will meet are Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo and Chinese President Jiang Zemin. The Chinese leader will stay behind after the APEC summit for a state visit. -- BERNAMA

ALJ LDB