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Abdullah-Myanmar

MALAYSIA TO SIGN MORE TRADE AGREEMENTS WITH MYANMAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 12 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is expected to sign several trade-related agreements with Myanmar when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad visits that country soon, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

The agreements are on investment guarantee, avoidance of double taxation and bilateral payments arrangement. The relationship between Malaysia and Myanmar has been described as a constructive engagement.

Dr Mahathir had agreed to visit Myanmar at the invitation of its Chairman of Law and Order Restoration Council, Senior General Than Shwe, he told a press conference after signing an agreement on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation between Malaysia and Myanmar at the Prime Minister's Department here.

Myanmar was represented by its National Planning and Economic Development Minister Brig Gen Abel.

Dr Mahathir and Than Shwe witnessed the signing which will pave the way for both sides to set up a joint commission to look into spurring cooperation in various fields.

Than Shwe, who arrived today for a five-day visit with a 35-member delegation, had earlier met Dr Mahathir at his office. During the one-hour meeting, Than Shwe briefed Dr Mahathir on the situation in Myanmar.

"These agreements are being studied by both sides and hopefully they could be signed...perhaps when the Prime Minister visits Myanmar...but all this depends on how fast it works out.

"But from the mood I see today, it looks like both sides are keen enough to increase cooperation," Abdullah said.

On the Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation Agreement, Abdullah said it would intensify cooperation between both sides, like offering training places for Myanmar trainees, including diplomatic training here.

Abdullah also said Malaysia hoped that such agreements would encourage partnerships in various business ventures as Dr Mahathir had emphasised Malaysia's capabilities in various areas like construction, mining and oil and gas exploration, tourism development, industries and manufacturing.

Abdullah said Malaysia hoped that Than Shwe's visit, which is the first of its kind, would produce results under Asean's policy of constructive engagement and non-interference towards Myanmar.

Than Shwe said Myanmar wants to join Asean as soon as possible, hopefully by next year, he said.

"There is no difficulty for Myanmar to join Asean next year. However, like other countries that are interested to join the grouping like Cambodia and Laos, it must go through all the processes," he said.

"Myanmar has given its assurance that all the necessary preparation is being undertaken to enable it to join the grouping. They are already involved in dialogue processes. Myanmar is already in the Asean Regional Forum and it has been given the status of Asean observer," he said. --

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