

16 NOV 1997

Chirac-Arrival

FRENCH PRESIDENT ARRIVES IN LANGKAWI

LANGKAWI, Nov 16 (Bernama) -- French President Jacques Chirac arrived here today for talks with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He was met on arrival at the Langkawi International Airport at Padang Matsirat by Dr Mahathir.

The presidential airbus carrying the French leader touched down at about 6.20pm.

Chirac is in Malaysia for a two day working visit after attending the summit of French-speaking countries in Hanoi, Vietnam. Chirac's trip is the first visit to Malaysia by a French head of state.

The French leader and Dr Mahathir are scheduled to hold talks tomorrow morning at the resort where the president is staying. Both leaders are expected to hold a joint news conference after the talks.

Chirac's visit comes amid reports of a United States probe into a gas deal in Iran involving Petronas and a French company.

Officials said the two leaders were expected to discuss bilateral and international issues including the Iranian gas deal.

A US official, William Ramsay, is due here next week to probe the US\$2 billion (RM6.4 billion) joint venture gas deal between Petronas, France's Total SA and Russia's Gazprom.

Washington is claiming that the project contravenes its Iran-Libya Sanctions Act.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is scheduled to call on Chirac tomorrow.

Tonight, Dr Mahathir will host a dinner in honour of the visiting French President. -- BERNAMA

MAM ARA JK