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Malaysia-Thailand

MALAYSIAN-THAI BORDER COMMITTEE MEETING GETS UNDER WAY

KUALA LUMPUR, June 5 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Thailand opened talks here today to discuss several issues related to their common border and review past security arrangements.

The 39th Malaysia-Thailand General Border Committee (GBC) meeting, the first since 1994, is co-chaired by Thai Prime Minister and Defence Minister Gen Chavalit Yongchaiyudh and Malaysian Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar.

The three-day meeting is expected to focus on cross-border movement of people and prevention of smuggling activities along the 647-km long border shared by the two countries.

An agreement is expected to be endorsed at the end of the meeting.

Syed Hamid is leading a 25-member delegation which includes Armed Forces Chief Gen Tan Sri Ismail Omar and Chief of Staff Jen Datuk Nawi Alias, and Deputy Inspector-General of Police Datuk Norian Mai.

Chavalit's 30-member delegation includes Deputy Army Chief of Staff Lt Gen Chokechai Hongthong and Director-General of the Police Department Gen Pracha Promnok.

Chavalit has attended previous GBC meetings in the past as he was the former Supreme Military Commander of the Thai Defence Forces.

The Thai Prime Minister was here on an official visit to Malaysia last February.

During his visit then, Chavalit had discussed border issues with his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

They agreed, among others, to jointly develop border areas that are difficult to demarcate. This was followed up by an agreement by the two countries signed on March 8 for the Golok River Mouth Improvement Project that would also help to determine a more precise boundary demarcation.

The GBC was set up in the 1970s to counter the communist threat along the common border. Malaysia and Thailand also conducted joint naval, air and army exercises annually under the auspices of the GBC. -- BERNAMA

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