

10 AUG 1998

Laos-Welcome

CEREMONIAL WELCOME FOR LAOTIAN PRIME MINISTER

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 10 (Bernama) -- Laotian Prime Minister Sisavath Keobounphanh arrived here today for a three-day official visit to Malaysia.

He was accorded an official welcome at Parliament Square, here, by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Sisavath inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by officers and men of the 1st Battalion Royal Malay Regiment after the national anthems of the two countries were played.

Members of the Malaysian cabinet and the diplomatic corps were then introduced to him.

Earlier, Sisavath and his wife, Khamla Keobounphanh, were met on arrival at the KL International Airport in Sepang, near here, by Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Leo Michael Toyad and Deputy Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Abu Bakar Daud who is the minister-in-attendance.

Sisavath is leading a 12-member delegation comprising several senior ministers and officials.

This is the first visit by a Laotian head of government since the country joined Asean in July last year.

Laos and Malaysia are expected to focus discussions on the financial and economic situation in the region and joint efforts to overcome the problems at the delegation meeting here tomorrow.

Laos, a land-locked country in the centre of the Indochinese peninsula, is reported to have been also hit by the Asian economic crisis.

Both countries are expected to sign agreements on bilateral trade and tourism cooperation.

The Laotian leader and his delegation will also have a luncheon meeting with members of the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCIM).

Tonight, Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali will host a dinner in honour of the Laotians.

Sisavath and Khamla are scheduled to have an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Ja'afar, and Raja Permaisuri Agong, Tuanku Najihah, at Istana Negara tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

AFY JK