

11 AUG 1998

Abdullah-Laos

MALAYSIA, LAOS TO ENHANCE BARTER TRADE

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 11 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Laos today agreed to enhance barter trade and promote the use of regional currencies in other areas of trade, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

" Malaysia informed Laos of the use of regional currencies as a new mechanism in trade and it had agreed to this," he said when briefing reporters on the talks between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and visiting Laotian Prime Minister Sisavath Keobounphanh.

The Prime Minister briefed the Laotian leader on the new mechanism at their meeting here, Abdullah said.

Malaysia hoped Laos would benefit from the use of regional currencies in trade, he said.

During the talks, the Prime Minister also offered Malaysia's help in the development of the rural areas in Laos, he said.

Malaysia and Laos would also have a government-officers exchange programme for their mutual benefit.

Laotian officers sent to Malaysia would study the government's rural development programmes as this country was a model to other nations in raising the standard of living of the rural people, Abdullah said.

Laos also sought Malaysia's help in organising English Language courses for its officers to help them in their dealings with Asean, he said.

Abdullah said Sisavath briefed Dr Mahathir on the development programmes in his country and the strategies it was adopting towards this end.

Dr Mahathir expressed confidence that Laos would achieve speedy progress following its membership of Asean about a year ago.

Abdullah said Laos had also requested Malaysia Airlines to resume flights to Vientiane where the airport had been upgraded.

Malaysia Airlines discontinued flights because of the passenger factor but the Prime Minister assured Laos that the airline could use smaller aircraft to mitigate this factor.

Abdullah said Laos had also assured Dr Mahathir that it would continue to cooperate with Asean members on all matters pertaining to the grouping.

After the talks Dr Mahathir and Sisavath witnessed the signing of trade and tourism agreements between the two countries.

Malaysia was represented by Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik while Laotian Trade Minister Phoumi Thipphavone signed for his country.

Malaysia-Laos trade totalled RM6.5 million last year. Malaysia's exports amounted to RM6.2 million while it imported RM270,000 worth of goods from Laos.

--BERNAMA

ARA AAM