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Mahathir-Talks

MAHATHIR HOLDS TALKS WITH MYANMAR LEADER

By: Syed Jamil Jaafar

YANGON, March 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad held talks here today with Myanmar leader Senior General Than Shwe on regional issues including the use of Asean currencies for intra-Asean trade.

Dr Mahathir, who advocated the "Asean currency for trade" plan as a means of mitigating the impact of the rising US dollar on the region's economies, raised the matter during discussions between the Malaysian and Myanmar delegations at Parliament House, here.

The prime minister, who arrived here earlier in the day for a two-day official visit to Myanmar, has already visited several other Asean capitals to win support for the plan.

Asean groups Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

Officials said both delegations also discussed barter trade and the Myanmar illegal immigrant problem in Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir also witnessed the signing of the avoidance of double taxation agreement and a memorandum of understanding on the abolition of visa for diplomatic and official passport holders.

The two documents were signed by Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his Myanmar counterpart Ohn Gyaw.

The prime minister also planted a tree at the People's Park to mark the visit, aimed at improving bilateral relations and regional solidarity.

Tonight, Gen Than Shwe, who is Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), hosted a dinner for Dr Mahathir and his delegation.

Gen Than Shwe was on hand to receive Dr Mahathir on his arrival to a red-carpet and 19-gun salute welcome for his first trip to Myanmar since it became an Asean member last year.

Hundreds of flag-waving children also gave Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, a rousing welcome.

Dr Mahathir last visited Myanmar in 1988 as a guest of then prime minister Maung Maung Kha. -- BERNAMA

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