

22 APR 1998

PM DEPARTS FOR HAADYAI

KUALA LUMPUR, April 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad left for a working visit to Haadyai this afternoon where he will witness the signing of two landmark agreements on the sale of natural gas from the Malaysia-Thailand Joint Development Area.

The prime minister, accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and several senior government officials, will witness the ceremony with his Thai counterpart, Chuan Leekpai, at the General Prem Tinsulanond Park in Songkhla.

The gas sale agreement will be signed between the purchasers, Petronas of Malaysia and the Petroleum Authority of Thailand, and the sellers comprising the Malaysia-Thailand Joint Authority (MTJA) and its contractors.

The first agreement is for the purchase of 390 million cubic feet of natural gas a day from Block B-18 for 20 years. The gas from the area is expected to be on stream in the first half of 2001.

The second agreement is for the purchase of 250 million cubic feet of natural gas a day for 16 years from Block B-17 and C-19 which will be on stream from the third quarter of 2002.

Dr Mahathir is also scheduled to meet Chuan and attend a dinner hosted by the latter before returning to Kuala Lumpur tonight.

This is the prime minister's second visit to Thailand this year after a two-day working visit to Bangkok on Feb 5 and 6.

-- BERNAMA

AH JK