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India-Visit  
TAMIL NADU CM TO VISIT MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 30 (Bernama) -- The chief minister of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, M. Karunanithi will arrive here for a four-day visit beginning Jan 7.

The visit comes amid reports that the Tamil Nadu state government has selected a Siemens-led consortium to build a US\$1.6 billion (US\$1=RM3.80) Ennore liquified natural gas (LNG) terminal and power plant despite attempts by Malaysia's national oil corporation, Petronas, to disqualify Siemens on a technicality.

Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said here today that Karunanithi was scheduled to call on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Jan 9.

The chief minister was also expected to hold talks with International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, he said.

Karunanithi's programme did not include any meeting with Petronas officials.

It was reported today that Petronas had in a letter to the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO), the agency executing the project, objected to the Siemens-led consortium having included a 16 percent customs duty in the price bid when the bid document had said that there was no customs duty on LNG.

Petronas had sought the disqualification of the Siemens-led consortium for the "error" on including customs duty in the price bid.

Samy Vellu said Karunanithi's visit was aimed at looking into Malaysia's experience in the privatisation of infrastructure projects.

He said a Malaysian company was interested to participate in the privatisation of an elevated highway project in Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu.

He added that apart from attending a briefing at the Works Ministry, Karunanithi was expected to give a talk on Tamil literature at the Putra World Trade Centre on Jan 8.

The chief minister's last official trip to Malaysia was in 1986 during the World Tamil Conference.

-- BERNAMA  
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