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Mahathir-China

DR MAHATHIR TO VISIT CHINA TO STRENGTHEN BILATERAL RELATIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to China from Aug 18 to 20 is expected not only to further enhance diplomatic relations but also result in more joint-venture projects including in the automotive field between the two countries.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said that among the joint ventures to be discussed was the setting up of the Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Berhad (Proton) plant in one of the provinces in China.

"China on the other hand is keen to set up a pulp and paper factory in Sabah," he told reporters after delivering a lecture on "Malaysia's Direction In The International Arena In The New Millennium", at the National Institute of Public Administration (Intan), in Bukit Kiara, here.

The visit of Dr Mahathir, who will be accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, is at the invitation of Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji in conjunction with the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and China.

Syed Hamid said that Dr Mahathir is scheduled to call on President Jiang Zemin and hold an official meeting with Zhu to discuss bilateral issues especially on trade and investment.

Dr Mahathir is also expected to state Malaysia's stand on the One China policy besides exchanging views with Zhu on the economic crisis faced by the region and relate Malaysia's experience in overcoming the crisis.

The prime minister will also deliver his keynote address at the Malaysia-China Forum organised by the Asian Strategic and Leadership Institute (Asli) and host a dinner to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Syed Hamid, who will be in Dr Mahathir's delegation, said that Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Kheng Yaik, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Defence Minister Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha, Sabah Chief Minister Tan Sri Osu Sukam and Pulau Pinang Chief Minister Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon would also be in the delegation.

The foreign minister said that Dr Mahathir would earlier visit Khabarovsk at the invitation of its president, Ishaev Victor Ivanovich, from Aug 15 to 18, and then visit Buryatia at the invitation of its president, Leonid Vassilievich, from Aug 20 to 22.

Khabarovsk and Buryatia are autonomous republics of Russia.

Syed Hamid said that in Khabarovsk, Dr Mahathir would hold discussions with the republic's leaders and visit Russia's aircraft factory in Komosolmsk and ship-building and timber yard in Na Amur.

The prime minister will also visit the headquarters of the Malaysian-based company, Syarikat Rimbunan Hijau, which has been awarded a timber concession there.

In Buryatia, Dr Mahathir is scheduled to visit the aircraft and helicopter factories in Ulan Ude and Irkutsk and hold talks with its president.

Dr Siti Hasmah will have a separate programme during the visit. Among others, she is scheduled to meet members of the local women's organisation in Khabarovsk and visit a children's welfare home in Buryatia.

At the lecture presentation, Syed Hamid, who is scheduled to visit Albania and Kosovo early next month to observe refugee camps for the Kosovars there, received a donation amounting to RM5,717.41 from the staff

of Intan.

He said that in line with the Cabinet's decision, all donations for the refugees should be channelled through the account of the Malaysian Humanitarian Trust Fund which the government also contributed to, for the Kosovars.

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