

13/08/1999

Dr Mahathir for three-day working visit to China

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will leave for a three-day working visit to China on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar said today.

Dr Mahathir was making the trip at the invitation of Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji as well as to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, he said.

Syed Hamid also said that the main purpose of the trip was to improve bilateral relationship and co-operation and to cement personal ties between the two leaders.

"China is an important player in this region, so any exchange of views is very useful to us and the region.

"Maybe we will touch on the code of conduct for the South China Sea which was agreed upon by Asean recently," the Minister said.

Dr Mahathir is also expected to meet with Chinese President Jiang Zemin to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues including the opening of a Consular-General office in Shanghai and joint-venture projects in the automobile, pulp and paper and banking sectors.

"Proton (Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Bhd) is interested in setting up an assembly plant in China while China is keen on building a pulp and paper plant in Sabah," he said.

Dr Mahathir will be accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd. Ali, the Ministers of Transport, Primary Industries, International Trade and Industry, Defence and Foreign Affairs.

The Chief Ministers of Penang and Sabah along with senior government officials, and members of the private sector and media are also part of the delegation.

The Prime Minister will host a dinner to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and open an exhibition of Malaysian goods at the Parkson Shopping Centre, Beijing.

Before visiting China, Dr Mahathir will visit Khabarovsk, an autonomous region in Russia, on Sunday.

After his China trip, he will visit Buryatia, another Russian autonomous region, on Aug 22.

(END)