

11/02/2000

Dr Mahathir to be first speaker at 10th Unctad meeting in Bangkok

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be the first speaker at the 10th meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad), beginning this Saturday in Bangkok.

He is also scheduled to attend the Asean-UN and Asean-Japan summits which will be held in conjunction with the 10th Unctad.

"Dr Mahathir's speech will be on globalisation, the financial architecture, free trade, development and matters of interest to Malaysia," Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar told reporters today.

Syed Hamid was speaking after presenting his ministry's excellent service awards at Dewan Puspanita here.

"The Asean-UN summit meeting will discuss the new millennium and the role of Asean and the UN.

"As we move into the future, what is the role of Asean? How can we play a greater role in order to influence the globalisation process which is unstoppable," he said.

How do we create a new financial and economic regime that would take into account the interests of developing nations?," Syed Hamid added.

He said the 10th Unctad would be attended by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry led by its deputy minister Datuk Kerk Choo Ting.

Asked if any meetings between Dr Mahathir and leaders attending the 10th Unctad had been set on the sidelines, Syed Hamid said this would be determined based on requests and needs.

"The meetings are all round-table affairs and therefore multilateral," he said.

Asked if the issue of East Timor would be raised at the Asean-UN meeting he said it could crop up during discussions on regional and political security.

Syed Hamid said East Timor leader Xanana Gusmao had during his visit here called on non-governmental organisations to help in the reconstruction of the ravaged territory.

Gusmao also said that the media could assist the NGOs by helping to channel aid to the right places.

Meanwhile, Bernama reports that Dr Mahathir will officially open the new Malaysian embassy complex in the Thai capital tomorrow upon arrival here to attend the 10th Unctad.

Malaysian ambassador to Thailand Datuk Syed Ariff Fadzillah said in Bangkok today that construction of the facility symbolised the close relations between the two neighbouring countries.

The project was jointly undertaken by Malaysian construction firm, Percon and Siam Syntech of Thailand.

"It underscores the philosophy of co-operation via joint-ventures between companies from both countries," he told Malaysian journalists covering the Unctad meeting.

Syed Ariff said although the complex was completed in December 1998, it would only be appropriate for the Prime Minister to open it officially.

The complex, among others, houses the chancery building, the ambassador's residence and mission staff quarters.

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