

23/02/2000

Fact-finding team to check out how to help Indonesians

A BUSINESS delegation will accompany Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on his visit to Indonesia to identify mutually beneficial opportunities and areas where Malaysia can help Indonesia.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said yesterday Dr Mahathir made a promise to visit Indonesia as soon as possible during a meeting with visiting Indonesian Foreign Minister Alwi Shihab on Monday.

Alwi came to Kuala Lumpur to deliver Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid's invitation for Dr Mahathir to visit Indonesia.

"I have been instructed by the Prime Minister to prepare arrangements for the visit, and to send a fact-finding team there first to see what areas the Indonesians are interested in," Syed Hamid said at a press conference after opening the International Symposium on Malaysian Business in the New Era in Subang Jaya.

He said Malaysia needs to work with Asean neighbours to build confidence in the region, and to Indonesia revive its economy.

"We should not only be seeking investments from outside. We in the region should have confidence in each other, and that in turn will be an attraction for foreign investors to come here," he added.

Asked if Alwi requested financial assistance from Malaysia during his visit, Syed Hamid said the matter was mentioned only in general.

"Malaysia has always been very positive in terms of financial assistance, but first we have to go and see what needs to be done. When we visit Indonesia it will be a very focused visit," he added.

Whatever assistance Malaysia provides to Indonesia will be in such a way that is beneficial to both countries, Syed Hamid said. "We will not be going in to take advantage of Indonesia or buy things cheap, that is not the intention."

Earlier, Syed Hamid said Malaysia will continue to create, maintain and expand bilateral and multilateral relationships for mutual benefit, based on the "prosper-thy-neighbour" principle.

"As a country in South-East Asia, Malaysia is very conscious of the need to have good relations with all countries big and small, including Australia," he added.

Syed Hamid said the fundamentals exist for a strong relationship between Malaysia and Australia, given their long ties in education, trade and investment. Malaysia is Australia's 13th largest trading partner while Australia is the 10th largest foreign investor in Malaysia.

Syed Hamid said both Malaysia and Australia are culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse. At the same time, there are also differences between the two countries which should be respected.

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