

09 OCT 2000

Commission

INDIA AND MALAYSIA HOLD WIDE-RANGING TALKS IN NEW DELHI

By: Mahesh Prasad

NEW DELHI, Oct 9 (Bernama) -- India and Malaysia held wide-ranging talks today covering foreign affairs, defence cooperation and greater movement of peoples in the region.

Malaysia's visiting Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar had meetings with India's Minister for External Affairs Jaswant Singh; Minister for Defence George Fernandes; and Minister for Civil Aviation Sharad Yadav.

Syed Hamid also called on President K.R. Narayanan later in the evening.

The interactions continued at the Second India-Malaysia Joint Commission Meeting which began this afternoon with opening remarks by Syed Hamid and Jaswant Singh.

Syed Hamid told Bernama that the meetings were "very positive."

The spokesman of the External Affairs Ministry described the meetings as "extremely warm" and "very purposeful."

Speaking on the topic of "India-Asean Partnership: Challenges and Opportunities" at a function organised by the Institute of Research and Information System of Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries, Syed Hamid said the spirit generated by talks at the political level should now permeate to the bureaucratic level.

"We need to overcome the bureaucratic impediments to cooperation," he said at the India-Asean Eminent Persons Lectures, the tenth in the series. The first one was delivered by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said tremendous opportunities existed for Asean and India to cooperate in the area of Information Technology.

Briefing newsmen on the talks and the JCM, the External Affairs Ministry spokesman said talks between Indian Airlines and Malaysia Airlines would be held next week to implement the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the two countries to enhance the number of flights of the respective airlines.

The MoU, he said, would lead to a substantial increase in flights between the two countries. Malaysia adds nine flights into India and three destinations

-- Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bangalore -- while India adds two Malaysian destinations, Penang and Langkawi.

As a result of the MoU, 1,500 additional seats have been added in the new sectors.

Fernandes said India was prepared for a joint venture with Malaysia in areas such as shipbuilding, manufacture of spare parts and aircraft maintenance. Defence cooperation could also be intensified in military training as well.

Syed Hamid said he would pursue with the Malaysian defence authorities the areas of cooperation mentioned by Fernandes.

At the eminent persons lecture, Syed Hamid spoke of the need for greater interaction between the peoples of India and Asean.

He said the opportunities of cooperation were enormous just as the challenges were phenomenal.

In reply to a question on India's candidature to be a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, he said Malaysia would consider India to be "one of the candidates to be debated for a permanent seat".

-- BERNAMA

MP MAM YBY