

23 OCT 2000

Syed Hamid-Arab

SAUDI DPM'S VISIT IMPORTANT FOR MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 23 (Bernama) -- The visit of Prince Sultan Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Saudi Arabia's second Deputy Prime Minister, to Malaysia tomorrow is an historic and important event, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

The visit was expected to open a new chapter in the bilateral relations between the two countries," he said.

The prince, who is also Saudi Arabia's Aviation and Defence Minister, is expected to meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and other Malaysia ministers during the visit.

Syed Hamid said the visit, from tomorrow until Oct 31, would focus on numerous issues, especially in bringing about peace in West Asia and the Palestine-Israel conflict.

"On the Palestine issue we have made our stand clear, that is, Israel should stop using its military on civilians and should find ways to reach a peace accord," he told reporters after receiving the Republic of Benin Foreign Minister Adji Antoine at Wisma Putra, here.

He said Prince Sultan Abdul Aziz was expected to brief Dr Mahathir and Abdullah on decisions taken at the recently concluded summit of the 22-member Arab League in Cairo.

The visit is at the invitation of Dr Mahathir. The Saudi delegation comprises four Saudi princes, three senior ministers and senior officials.

On Antoine's visit, Syed Hamid said it was to foster closer relations between the two countries and to learn from Malaysia's development success.

Benin is a palm-oil producing state in West Africa with about six million people.

He said Benin also asked for Malaysia's support for its candidacy as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The current position is being held by Japan, whose term finishes end of this year.

"We will study their argument before deciding on whom we will support but usually we support those who are supported by the region," Syed Hamid said.

-- BERNAMA

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