

Ban on imported Thai beef products lifted

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Decision follows meeting between Mahathir and Thai PM

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PUTRAJAYA, Tues: Malaysia has lifted the ban on imported beef and beef products from Thailand with immediate effect, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

He said the decision was made after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Thailand Prime Minister Lt Col Dr Thaksin Shinawatra held a one-hour closed-door meeting at the prime minister's office here.

The government had banned the import of beef and beef products from Thailand following the outbreak of mad cow disease in Europe at the end of last year.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia had sent a team of veterinarians to inspect the situation in Thailand recently, and the team had filed a report before the decision to lift the ban was made today.

Thaksin and his delegation arrived at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) at 11.30am today and were received by Syed Hamid.

The delegation then proceeded to a meeting with Ma-

hathir at Putra Jaya.

Among other issues discussed at the meeting was the Trans-Thai-Malaysia gas pipeline between Petronas and Petroleum Authority of Thailand, which has been delayed.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia wants the project to be completed as soon as possible as Petronas has to bear a high cost for the delay.

The agreement, which will move gas from the offshore Thai-Malaysia Joint Development Area, states that work must start to enable delivery of gas by July 2002.

Syed Hamid said that the

Thai authority has given the assurance that it will resolve the matter in three months.

"To Malaysia, this is important as the cost is accumulating on a daily basis and the biggest part is borne by Petronas as it is the main party involved."

On joint cooperation in fishing, Syed Hamid said Malaysia has agreed to allow Malaysian and Thai companies to conduct deep sea fishing in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Syed Hamid said Thailand has asked for an extension on the closing time at checkpoints at the borders.