

Dr M visits Yemen to help improve trade ties

By SA'ODAH ELIAS **STAR** 16 NOV 2001
summer products.

SANA'A: The four-day official visit by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Yemen will open up another point of entry for Malaysian products to West Asia and nearby African countries.

Foreign Minister Datuk Syed **Hamid Albar** said although close trade relations between Malaysian and Yemen had existed for many years there was still room for improvement.

He said improved trade relations with Yemen could be a springboard for Malaysian products to enter new markets in countries like Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Somalia and Eriteria which have a combined population of more than 150 million.

"The economic recession in the United States proved that we cannot depend solely on our traditional trade partners. We need to explore new markets for our products to insulate us from the effect of any economic problems faced by our existing trade partners," he said on Dr Mahathir's visit here.

The volume of bilateral trade currently favours Malaysia. Malaysia's export to Yemen last year **totalled RM261.48mil**, almost 50% of which were palm oil and palm oil products while the rest were electronic, timber and **con-**

The volume of Yemen's export to Malaysia for the same period was **RM67.5mil** of which 99.8% is crude oil.

Dr Mahathir, who is accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, Mentris Besar of **Pahang**, Johor and Kedah, prominent businessmen and representatives from port authorities, arrived here late yesterday after a private visit to Europe.

He is scheduled to meet with **Yemeni** Prime Minister Abdul Kader Ba Jammal today and is expected to witness the signing of two agreements between the two countries.

They agreed on training of **Yemeni** civil servants by Malaysia and setting up of a joint commission to enhance bilateral relations.

He is also expected to meet with members of **Yemeni** chambers of commerce and visit the region of Hadaramout where he will meet local *ulamas* and Malaysian students.

Syed **Hamid** said two major opportunities to **be** explored during the visit was the possibility of joint oil exploration between Petronas and Yemen and the renewal of contract between Airod and the republic's **airforce** for its aircraft maintenance.