

31 OCT 2001

Bahrain-Arrival

BAHRAIN'S SHAIKH KHALIFA ARRIVES FOR TWO-DAY VISIT

SEPANG, Oct 31 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa of Bahrain arrived today for a two-day working visit to Malaysia which will focus on enhancing bilateral relations and economic cooperation between the two countries.

The special aircraft carrying him and his entourage landed at the KL International Airport here at 2pm.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar was on hand to welcome Shaikh Khalifa who last visited Malaysia last January.

Bahrain comprises 33 islands on the western side of the Persian Gulf and Manama is its largest city as well as its capital. Bahrain's total area is 707 sq km and its population is estimated at close to 650,000.

Since the discovery of crude oil in the 1930's, oil production and refining have dominated Bahrain's economy.

But the Bahraini government has developed aluminium-related industry and tourism, and the country has transformed itself into an international banking centre.

Tomorrow, Shaikh Khalifa will have an audience with the Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin of Terengganu, followed by talks with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Prime Minister's Office in Putrajaya.

Kuala Lumpur and Manama are scheduled to sign two memorandums of understanding, one for the establishment of a Malaysian trade and distribution centre and the other for the development of Islamic banking and finance in Bahrain.

Bahrain and Petronas, the national petroleum corporation, will also sign two oil exploration and production-sharing agreements involving two blocks in Bahrain's eastern offshore area.

Another document will be signed between Malaysia's Tekno Logam Sdn Bhd and its Bahraini counterpart, Tekno Logam Company, to establish a manufacturing plant in Bahrain to produce gaskets and metal pipe connectors, among other things.

Bilateral trade as of August this year stood at RM224.8 million and was in Bahrain's favour.

In a statement issued at the start of the visit, Shaikh Khalifa said there were several important ideas and principles that bound the two countries together.

He said these positions were strongly underpinned by Islamic ties religion which offered a wide area of cooperation.

"In this framework and in light of the events in the international arena, we are looking forward to a unified stand by the Islamic countries to face any attempt to abuse Islam which totally rejects all forms of terrorism and calls for tolerance and cohesion among the people," he said.

Sheikh Khalifa also extended greetings from the Amir of Bahrain, Shaikh Hamad bin Essa Al Khalifa, to the leaders and people of Malaysia.

He expressed the hope that his visit here would enhance friendly relations and bolster cooperation between Bahrain and Malaysia.

-- BERNAMA

MAM AZH JK