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Syed Hamid-Bahrain

BAHRAIN INTERESTED TO ESTABLISH CLOSE TIES WITH ASEAN

PUTRAJAYA, Nov 1 (Bernama) -- Bahrain is keen to use Malaysia as a stepping stone to establish closer rapport with East Asia particularly the Southeast Asian region.

Prime Minister of Bahrain Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa, who is here on a two-day visit, have in fact requested that his Malaysian counterpart, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, convey Manama's desire to forge close relations with Asean countries at the upcoming summit of the 10-member grouping in Brunei Darussalam.

Briefing reporters on the hour-long meeting of the two heads of government here today, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said: "They hope, through Malaysia, they can have relations with various countries in East Asia and Southeast Asia."

He said Bahrain and Malaysia would also look into the possibility of collaborating in the field of education, medicine and air travel.

Ties between Kuala Lumpur and Manama were further enhanced with the signing of two memorandums of understanding (MOUs), one on the establishment of a Malaysian Trade and Distribution Centre (MTDC) in Bahrain and the other on the development of Islamic banking and finance.

The two MoUs were signed by Shaikh Khalifa and Dr Mahathir.

The national oil company, Petronas, signed two agreements with the government of Bahrain on oil exploration and production-sharing in respect of two blocks located on the eastern offshore area of Bahrain.

Petronas was represented by its chief executive officer and chairman, Tan Sri Hassan Marican, while Bahraini Oil Minister Shaikh Isa Ali Khalifa signed on behalf of the government of Bahrain.

Petronas has been awarded the tender based on its competitive proposal submitted in June this year to the government of Bahrain.

Syed Hamid said through the MTDC, Malaysia would be able to display its products with the view of marketing them not only in Bahrain but also in other Gulf states.

He said Malaysia would like to see more investment involving business people from the Gulf including Bahrain and more tourists from there visiting this country.

"They also would like us to look at their country for joint ventures and collaborations in various fields," he said.

The minister also disclosed that a Malaysian company was poised to be offered to manage a port in Bahrain.

As of August this year, bilateral trade stood at RM224.8 million and was in Bahrain's favour.

To a question, Syed Hamid said Shaikh Khalifa and Dr Mahathir did discuss the Sept 11 terror attacks on New York and Washington in terms of how the event had changed the way people cooperate or do business.

After the talks at the Prime Minister's Department, the Bahraini leader and his entourage were hosted to a luncheon by Dr Mahathir at his official residence, Seri Perdana.

This morning, Shaikh Khalifa had an audience with the Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong, the Sultan of Terengganu at the Istana Terengganu in Kuala Lumpur.

-- BERNAMA

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