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Syed Hamid-Megawati

ECONOMIC ISSUES MAY TOP MAHATHIR-MEGAWATI TALKS, SAYS SYED HAMID

KOTA TINGGI, Aug 25 (Bernama) -- Current economic developments are among issues expected to feature prominently in talks between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri's two-day visit to Malaysia beginning Monday.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said economic matters are expected to be discussed as Dr Mahathir had firmly held to the "Prosper Thy Neighbour" principle to see all countries in the Asean regional grouping progressing and the people live in prosperity.

"One issue that may be deliberated on is economy as Dr Mahathir holds to the principle of seeing our neighbours prosper in the hope of helping each other," he told a media conference here on Megawati's visit, the first as Indonesian President.

He, however, did not say whether the discussions would focus specifically on Malaysia's intention to help revive the republic's economy as expressed during President Abdurrahman Wahid's visit to Malaysia previously.

He said discussions in the first meeting with Megawati, as Indonesian President, with Dr Mahathir would be an open agenda without specific issues in keeping with the normal practice for a state visit.

Besides touching on bilateral matters between Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta, their talks are also expected to cover politics and latest developments in the region and international issues, he said.

Syed Hamid said Megawati, who is coming to Malaysia, after visiting several Asean-member countries would enable her to have a comprehensive discussion on various issues with Dr Mahathir.

"We believe, the visit will help enhance further the close ties between the two friendly nations, resulting in closer cooperation in all dimensions," he said.

Megawati, who will be accompanied by her husband Taufiq Kiemas, will be accorded a ceremonial welcome at Parliament Square on Monday, he said.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Noer Hassan Wirajuda and a 60-member delegation would also be following Megawati in the visit being made on the invitation of Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah.

Asked to comment on the proposal to mete out whipping on illegal immigrants, Syed Hamid said Malaysia had always held to the principle of sovereignty of a country.

"If whipping is stated in the country's laws, it must be abided regardless of whether by Malaysians or foreigners," he said.

Moreover, whipping for illegal immigrants was not new as it had been enforced by a neighbouring country, said Syed Hamid, who is MP for Kota Tinggi.

"It is to discourage illegal immigrants from coming over. Malaysia can no longer cope with illegal immigrants who enter the country without following stipulated legal procedures," he added.

The media conference was held at Syed Hamid's residence here after the wedding reception of his son Syed Sadiq Obaidi Albar, 26, a businessman, with Natasha Datuk Abdul Karim.

-- BERNAMA

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