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PM's trip to Russia aimed at renewing bilateral ties

RAWANG, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's trip to Russia this week is aimed at renewing bilateral ties and not to finalise the purchase of Sukhoi Su-30 fighter planes.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the Government's plans to buy the Sukhoi were still at the discussion stage.

"Dr Mahathir wants to renew ties with Russia after meeting President (Vladimir) Putin at the Apec Summit in Brunei," he said after handing over 20 Perodua Kancil to representatives of the Governments of Morocco, Oman and Sudan.

Dr Mahathir will visit Moscow from Wednesday to Saturday and Germany from Sept 18 to 20.

Syed Hamid said Dr Mahathir planned to discuss regional and international issues with Putin during the visit.

"He will also seek Putin's advice on the latest developments in aerospace technology."

On the Prime Minister's visit to Britain, Syed Hamid said he was scheduled to meet Malaysian students at the High Commission and Prime Minister Tony Blair.

In Germany, Dr Mahathir will officiate at the opening of the Chancery building of the Malaysian embassy in Berlin.

Meanwhile, Bernama reports that Dr Mahathir will be accompanied by wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and a 60-member delegation consisting of Cabinet Ministers, senior government officials and businessmen.

A Wisma Putra statement said Dr Mahathir's visit to Russia was to further enhance political, economic and trade co-operation.

"The visit will enable the Prime Minister to obtain first hand impressions of the new dynamics that prevail in Russia in the post-Soviet era," the statement said.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to address a Malaysia-Russia Business Forum, jointly organised by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli), the Russian-Asean Co-operation Fund and Matrade.

During the visit, both governments are expected to sign a memorandum of understanding on palm oil credit and payment arrangement, while Bank Negara and Vnescomnobank of Russia will sign a deal on palm oil payment arrangement.

On Dr Mahathir's trip to Germany, the statement said it was to showcase what Malaysia had to offer to investors and tourists.

It will also provide for greater collaboration and co-operation in the field of education with Germany.

(END)