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PM to visit Yemen to strengthen ties, boost trade

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to Yemen later this week is aimed at strengthening bilateral relations, boosting trade and investment ties.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the visit was also to source new markets for Malaysian products and to seek opportunities in the oil exploration industry.

The Prime Minister will be accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and a delegation which includes Ministers, Menteris Besar and the business community.

The visit from Aug 15 to 18 is also to reciprocate the visit of Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Salleh who was in Malaysia from Feb 11 to 14, 1998.

Syed Hamid said Dr Mahathir would hold talks with Ali Abdullah, and visit the Majlis Syura (Consultative Council) in Sana'a.

He would also hold a dialogue with the Yemen Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Dr Mahathir will also visit the Aden Free Trade Zone and Port, the historical site of El Yemen in Sana'a and Shibam daan Tarim in Hadramaut.

He will also meet Malaysian students in Hadramaut.

Dr Siti Hasmah will visit the Hadramaut Handicapped Children's Care Centre where she will make a donation of US\$10,000 (RM38,000). She will also meet the Yemen National Women's Organisation.

Syed Hamid said he would sign two Memoranda of Understanding - one on the establishment of a joint commission between Malaysia and Yemen; and another on co-operation in the field of civil service, personnel management and public administration.

He said the Yemen government looked to Malaysia as a model of an Islamic nation, and had asked for help to develop its human resources, rural areas and to attract investment.

At present, bilateral trade is heavily in favour of Malaysia. Malaysian imports from Yemen last year totalled RM67.6 million while its exports totalled RM261.5 million.

Syed Hamid said Petronas used to have a facility in Aden but this has closed down.

Earlier, Syed Hamid met Raymond Anthony Hall, the regional representative for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and the Philippines.

Hall is based in Jakarta.

Syed Hamid said they discussed the situation in East Timor, as well as the problems of asylum seekers, half of whom were from Islamic countries.

He said they discussed multi-lateral measures for Islamic nations to help resolve this problem.

"Hall also commended Malaysia for its co-operation in assisting the United Nations and for our positive contributions," he said.

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