

What Dr M will likely discuss with Thaksin in Bangkok

STAR - 5 JUL 2002

By PAUL GABRIEL

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysia-Thailand Joint Commission, which is the main mechanism for bilateral co-operation between the two countries, will re-convene in October after a two-year break.

Thai Ambassador to Malaysia Chaisiri Anamarn said Malaysia would host the ninth session of the commission, which last met in Bangkok in 1999.

Issues connected to the commission and border demarcation are expected to be on the agenda of bilateral talks between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Thai counterpart, Thaksin Shinawatra, in Bangkok tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, arrives in Chiangmai today for a two-day official visit to Thailand, his first since Thaksin became Prime Minister last January.

Chaisiri said the commission played a "distinctive role" in solving existing problems as well as developing new areas of co-operation.

"Common issues, such as bilateral trade, border co-operation, human resource development and the elimination of transnational crimes, are listed as top priorities in our bilateral agenda," he said in an interview before leaving for

Bangkok on Wednesday to prepare for Dr Mahathir's visit.

In Chiangmai, Dr Mahathir will take a look at small and medium-scale development projects under the "One Village, One Product" scheme.

In Bangkok tomorrow, Dr Mahathir will also launch the Thai-Malaysian Chamber of Commerce.

Later, Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah will have an audience with King Bhumipol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit.

Chaisiri said border demarcation work between Malaysia and Thailand had been progressing, adding that the only remaining dispute along the 647km common border involved the Bukit Jeli stretch.

"It is only a small technical hitch.

"The two sides have expressed the political will to amicably resolve the dispute over Bukit Jeli," he said, adding that the Land Boundary Committee would meet in Pattaya from July 11 to 13 to discuss the issue.

Chaisiri said that at the coming Joint Commission meeting, Thailand would propose the setting up of a sub-committee to focus on socio-economic co-operation.

On bilateral trade, he said the total volume last year reached US\$5.8bil (RM22bil), adding that Malaysia's trade surplus had averaged US\$422mil (RM1.6bil) per year.