

04 JUL 2002

Syed Hamid-Thailand

DR M TO OPEN MALAYSIA-THAILAND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

PUTRAJAYA, July 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will open the Malaysia-Thailand Chamber of Commerce during his two-day visit to Thailand beginning tomorrow.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Dr Mahathir would also give a luncheon talk for the Malaysian and Thailand business community.

He said Dr Mahathir would leave for Chiangmai from Alor Setar tomorrow for an unofficial meeting with Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

"The next day Dr Mahathir will depart for Bangkok for an official meeting with Thaksin," he told reporters at his office here today.

He said the two leaders were expected to discuss wide ranging bilateral matters, including the Petronas gas pipeline project, border issues and the setting up of Asean+3 (Japan, South Korea and China) secretariat in Kuala Lumpur.

"We want to get things moving. After the idea of Asean+3 secretariat was mooted by Dr Mahathir last year, we have been receiving very encouraging response and we feel it was time now to push for the implementation," he said.

He said all Asean members must provide full assistance for the setting up of the secretariat as it must be institutionalised.

Besides Syed Hamid, Dr Mahathir would be accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik and Agriculture Minister Datuk Effendi Norwawi.

Also in the delegation are Armed Forces Chief Gen Tan Sri Zahidi Zainuddin, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai, Petronas President Tan Sri Hassan Marican and Economic Planning Unit Director-General Datuk Iskandar Dzakurnain Badarudin.

Syed Hamid said Thailand had also shown keen interest to be part of the anti-terrorism agreement signed by Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines early this year.

"The issues to be discussed by the two leaders are open, including the construction of a canal at the southern part of Thailand," he said.

Dr Mahathir would also visit a ceramic plant, a model of success of Thailand's small-and medium-scale industries (SMIs) and two factories under the country's "one village, one product" policy.

Dr Mahathir is expected to return home on Sunday morning.

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