

17/08/2002

Malaysia, Myanmar to sign two MoUs during PM's visit

PUTRAJAYA, Fri. - Malaysia and Myanmar are set to sign two memoranda of understanding during Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's two-day visit beginning Sunday, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

The MoU's are for an offshore oil exploration agreement between Petronas and Myanmar's Ministry of Energy, and for a study on the construction of mini-hydro plants at the Nga Moe Yeik and Tabuhla dams.

The second MoU will be signed between Tepat Teknik Sdn Bhd and Myanmar's Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation.

Dr Mahathir's 300-member delegation will include his wife, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali; International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz; Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Amar Leo Moggie; Syed Hamid, senior Government officials and businessmen.

"We hope that this will be a constructive visit and will further enhance the relationship between Malaysia and Myanmar. We will continue to play a role to assist them," Syed Hamid said at Wisma Putra.

Three more MoUs - on the export of steel, telecommunications and Yangon city development - are also on the cards but have not been confirmed.

Dr Mahathir's visit is at the invitation of the State Peace and Development Council chairman, Senior General Than Shwe, and is also to reciprocate Than Shwe's visit to Malaysia in September last year.

Kuala Lumpur and Yangon established diplomatic relations in 1958.

Syed Hamid said Dr Mahathir and Than Shwe would also exchange views on bilateral issues especially trade and investment.

Dr Mahathir's schedule includes a keynote address at the Malaysia-Myanmar Technology Conference, jointly organised by the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (Might) and the State Peace and Development Council in collaboration with the Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) and Institute Sultan Iskandar.

With its RM2.23 billion investment - mainly in timber processing, hotel, tourism, trading, mining, agriculture and manufacturing - Malaysia is currently the fourth largest foreign investor in Myanmar, after Singapore, the United Kingdom and Thailand.

Malaysia's total trade with Myanmar last year amounted to RM1.045 billion with exports to Myanmar totalling RM748.6 million and imports valued at RM297.1 million.

Syed Hamid said Dr Mahathir would also have a dialogue with Malaysians living in Myanmar during his visit.

Describing Malaysia-Myanmar relations as "warm and cordial," he said about 200 Myanmar are undergoing short courses under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme. About 16,000 Myanmar are also working legally in Malaysia, mainly in the construction and garment sectors.

There is no plan for a meeting between Dr Mahathir and Myanmar's Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.