

26 JUL 2002  
Syed Hamid-Powell  
POWELL TO MEET DR M AND ABDULLAH DURING VISIT

PUTRAJAYA, July 26 (Bernama) -- US Secretary of State Colin Powell will meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi during his visit here next week.

Powell would arrive on Monday and was scheduled to meet Dr Mahathir and Abdullah the following day, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

"I am sure during this visit we will be able to exchange views and information. We look forward to the visit of Colin Powell and various US State Department officials," he said at a press conference after handing over a cheque for US\$30,000 to the Syrian Ambassador to Malaysia, Dr Kamal Sharaf, at his office here.

Syed Hamid said Powell was expected to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues such as terrorism and the Palestine-Israel conflict.

The international community was saddened and outraged by the aggressive actions of Israel, which attacked civilians, he said.

He was referring to an Israeli air strike on Tuesday in Gaza City that killed 15 Palestinians, including Hamas military commander Salah Shehade and nine children.

On the money, he said it was the Malaysian government's donation for victims of the Zeyzoun Dam floods in Syria on June 4.

"As a mark of good bilateral relations and sympathy and sadness over the tragedy, we should give something to assist them," he said.

In the tragedy, 10,000 people were rendered homeless and 20 people were reported dead, he added.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia had been informed that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad would be coming to Malaysia next year.

He will be attending the non-aligned summit in February and Organisation of Islamic Conference summit in October, both to be held in Kuala Lumpur.

Malaysia opened its embassy in Damascus early this year while Syria opened its embassy in Kuala Lumpur last year.

Syed Hamid said trade between the two countries was still small, amounting to about US\$46.9 million, and no investment was recorded.

Meanwhile, he said the issue of the date for calculating arrears Singapore should pay Malaysia for supply of water under the 1961 and 1962 agreements was something that should be discussed.

"We have submitted that we are entitled to arrears. If we cannot resolve it, there is a provision under the agreements for us to refer the thing to arbitration," he said.

"We got the right to a review, whether it is from 1986-1987 or from the date that we will agree on. That is something we should negotiate," he said.

Based on the 1961 agreement expiring in 2011, the water price should have been revised in 1986, while under the 1962 agreement expiring in 2061, the water price should have been revised in 1987, he said.

Syed Hamid said both sides should go to the negotiating table with an open mind so that agreement could be reached.

Both countries have also yet to agree on the formula for fixing the price of water to be supplied by Malaysia after the 1962 agreement expires in 2061. The 1961 agreement will not be renewed when it expires in 2011.

The water issue is one of the most difficult among several issues that

the two countries want to resolve in a package through negotiations.

Other issues in the package include KTM land in Singapore, the withdrawal of CPF savings by peninsular Malaysians and the use of Malaysian airspace by Singapore aircraft.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia had proposed several dates to Singapore for resumption of talks on these issues.

-- BERNAMA

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