

31 JUL 2003

Putin-Visit

PUTIN TO VISIT M'SIA ON TUESDAY

KUALA LUMPUR, July 31 (Bernama) -- Russian President Vladimir Putin will make an official visit to Malaysia on Aug 5, the Foreign Ministry said today.

The visit, at the invitation of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullaill, was originally slotted for July 8, but had to be rescheduled to Tuesday due to unforeseen circumstances, it said in a statement.

"The visit is to reciprocate the one made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Russia in March last year.

"President Putin's visit to Malaysia is historic as this will be the first ever official visit by a Russian President to the country," it said.

Putin would be accompanied by an official delegation comprising ministers, deputy ministers and senior government officials.

A business delegation would also be part of the entourage, it said.

The Foreign Ministry said Putin's visit reflected the importance and significance Russia attached to the Malaysia-Russia relations.

This, Wisma Putra said, was evident from the fact that Malaysia would be the only country Putin would be visiting while in the region.

"Furthermore, apart from Vietnam, Malaysia is the first ever non-Socialist country among Asean member states which a leader of the Soviet Union/Russian Federation will visit," the statement said.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties 35 years ago, Kuala Lumpur and Moscow have enjoyed good bilateral relations based on mutual respect, the desire of both sides to enhance, improve and diversify bilateral cooperation in areas such as defence, trade, information technology, education, aerospace and aviation industries, biomedicine, linguistics and culture, it said.

Cooperation in the education sector between both countries had been on the upward trend. Currently, there are about 400 Malaysian students pursuing tertiary education in various universities in Russia.

Bilateral trade between Malaysia and Russia last year stood at RM1.34 billion, with the balance of trade in Russia's favour.

Wisma Putra said major exports to Russia include vegetable oils in fluid or solid crude, refined or crude, animal or vegetable oils and fats, processed waxes of animal or vegetable origin, telecommunications equipment, parts, accessories and magazine.

Major imports from Russia include fertilizers, manufactured flat-rolled products of iron or non-alloy steel, platted or coated Ingots and other primary forms, it said.

Putin is expected to hold talks with Dr Mahathir on bilateral economic cooperation and wide-ranging international issues. He would also launch the Malaysia-Russia Business Council.

Three agreements are to be signed during the visit. They are:

\* Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation;

\* Agreement on Cooperation in Information and Communications Technology; and

\* Contract for the supply and delivery of Sukhoi SU-30 MKM Aircraft, Integrated Logistics Support Equipment and Services for the Royal Malaysian Air Force.

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