

04 AUG 2003

Putin-Arrival

PUTIN ARRIVES FOR TWO-DAY VISIT TO MALAYSIA

SEPANG, Aug 4 (Bernama) -- Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived here today for a two-day official visit to Malaysia, the first by a Russian head of state to the country.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, who is minister-in-attendance, greeted him at the KL International Airport (KLIA) when his aircraft landed at 5.10pm, amid tight security.

There were initial fears that Putin might again postpone his trip to Malaysia following Friday's deadly attack on a military hospital in the town of Mozdok near restive Chechnya which killed at least 50 people.

Putin was originally scheduled to make his way here on July 8 but that trip was called off after at least 20 people were reportedly killed by suicide bombers at a rock concert in Moscow.

Putin is here at the invitation of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail. The visit is to reciprocate Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to Russia in March last year.

The Russian leader will be accorded a red carpet welcome at the Parliament Square in Kuala Lumpur tomorrow before attending the launching of the Malaysia-Russia Business Council.

He and Dr Mahathir are scheduled to hold talks in Putrajaya on bilateral economic and wide-ranging international issues.

Bilateral trade stood at RM1.34 billion last year and was largely in Russia's favour.

Kuala Lumpur and Russia are expected to ink three agreements, on cooperation in communications, defence, and science and technology.

Putin is also scheduled to attend a banquet at the Istana Negara hosted in his honour by Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin.

-- BERNAMA

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