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Thaksin's visit affirms close ties

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YAN, Sat. - Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's two-day working visit to Langkawi from July 27 underscores the close relations between Thailand and Malaysia.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said among the Asean countries, besides Thailand, Malaysia had annual exchanges of working visits with the leaders of Brunei and Indonesia.

"For the other Asean countries, we have other means of fostering ties or overcoming problems," he said after opening a micro-credit scheme briefing jointly organised by Bank Pertanian Malaysia and Yan Umno division here today.

On Thaksin's visit, Syed Hamid said it was not under the framework of the Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Growth Triangle but part of the annual meetings between the Thai leader and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Last year, Dr Mahathir visited Thailand, so this time it is Thaksin's turn to visit Malaysia to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues."

Syed Hamid said Malaysia shared many areas of co-operation with Thailand, including agriculture, deep-sea fishing, the rubber industry, and tourism.

"There is also the question of delineating the border checkpoints."

Syed Hamid said Langkawi was chosen as the venue for the meeting to underscore potential co-operation that both countries could undertake in tourism.

"We chose Langkawi because it is a tourism destination and we want to establish closer co-operation with Thailand in this sector, with joint promotional activities."

On another matter, Syed Hamid, who was asked on Dr Mahathir's recent visit to Ukraine, said he would seek to establish a mission there.