

05 OCT 2003

Hamid-Tribute

ASEAN'S 'SURPRISE' TRIBUTE AN HONOUR FOR PM, SAYS SYED HAMID

By: Salbiah Said & Openg Onn

NUSA DUA, (Bali) Oct 5 (Bernama) -- The "surprise" tribute for Datuk

Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad from the Association of South East Asian Nations

(ASEAN) at the Leaders' Summit on Tuesday, has been described as an honour

for the Malaysian premier and the nation.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the tribute

organised by Indonesia, which currently holds the ASEAN chair, and host of

the Ninth ASEAN Summit in Bali, was intended to be a surprise for Dr Mahathir.

"It is not supposed to be announced. The intention is to be a surprise

for PM. I don't know how to handle this," he told a media conference here

today.

Hamid was taken by surprise when asked on the tribute, which is contained in the programme for the Malaysian media covering the

Ninth ASEAN

Summit and other related meetings from Oct 5 to 8 here.

On the schedule, Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri will pay

tribute and present a memento to Dr Mahathir after the signing of the

historic ASEAN charter known as the Bali Concord II.

The Bali Concorde II, or the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, will

reinforce the three main pillars of economic integration, security and

social development, in a move which is expected to bind the grouping more

tightly together.

The new charter refers to an ASEAN community with "three pillars": the

ASEAN Economic Community, the ASEAN Security Community and the ASEAN Social

and Cultural Community.

"To us it is not only an honour for the PM in his personal capacity,

but also an honour for our country," said Syed Hamid, noting that this is

the first time that ASEAN members are organising the special event for Dr

Mahathir, who retires end of this month.