

Mahathir goes into huddle with Thaksin upon arrival

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BANGKOK: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here for a two-day visit yesterday and almost immediately met Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra for talks.

Their meeting took place at the Thai premier's official residence, ahead of a reception

held in conjunction with the visit.

Although there was no specific agenda, the two had been expected to discuss issues concerning the insurgency in Thailand's Muslim-dominated southern provinces.

Dr Mahathir's visit has

gained wide media attention, in part due to his suggestion recently that Thailand's southern provinces should be granted autonomy as a solution to end the insurgency, which has killed more than 1,000 people since January 2004.

His wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah

Mohd Ali, is accompanying him on his visit here.

Tomorrow, he will meet former Thai premier Anand Panyarachun before having an audience with the King and Queen at Klaikangvol Palace.

The former premier, who made his last appearance here

at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Summit in 2003, was invited to Thailand by Anand, the chairman of the National Reconciliation Commission, which is playing a key role in finding a solution to the unrest in the south.

While attending the Apec

summit in Busan, South Korea, on Saturday, Thaksin had said he was asking for greater cooperation from his Malaysian counterpart, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, in the case of 131 Thai Muslims who fled across the border into Malaysia last August. - Bernama