

Abdullah to warm ties with Thais

NST- 31/1/2007

BANGKOK: Malaysia's prime minister will visit Bangkok next month after years of strain over separatist violence along their shared border.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will travel to the Thai capital on Feb 11 and 12, the foreign ministry announced.

"Prior to this government, relations between our two countries were not as satisfactory," Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram said.

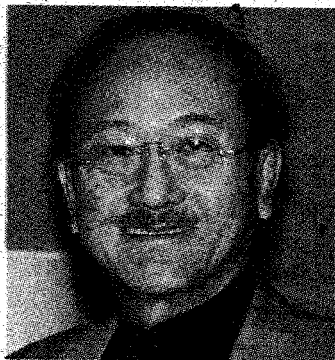
"I believe we are on our way to making amends."

Relations have been strained by three years of separatist violence in Thailand's Muslim-majority south, where a majority of the population is ethnic Malay.

Ousted prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra had periodically accused Malaysia of harbouring insurgents and of failing to co-operate in the battle against the militants.

Nitya said Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont was committed to resolving the unrest through peaceful means.

The Thai foreign minister also defended Thailand's harsh reaction to an unofficial meeting between



Thai Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram says Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok are well on their way to making amends

Thaksin and Singapore Deputy Prime Minister S. Jayakumar.

"It's a breach of understanding among friends," he said.

Thailand cancelled diplomatic meetings and launched an investigation into alleged eavesdropping by a Singapore-owned telecom — actions which Nitya said were justified.

"That was perfectly called for." — AFP