

Syed Hamid: Dr M not an official mediator

PUTRAJAYA Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was never told to back off from mediating in the Muslim insurgency in southern Thailand as he was never made an "official" mediator.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the Government was aware that the former prime minister had close contacts with the Thais and he was informed to make full use of this to help bring peace to the troubled region.

"He never had an official role. I was the one who asked him to do whatever he could since he was invited by Thaksin Shinawatra, then the Thai leader," Syed Hamid told *The Star*.

"I told him since he had contacts and a good reputation, he could talk to them and give his views.

"Whatever support we can give we will give, so I gave him some notes and explained how the Malaysian Government looked at

The Star - 26/11/2007
the problem."
Syed Hamid said that when Dr Mahathir came back from a visit to Thailand, he was debriefed on his talks with the Thai king and Thaksin.

"It was useful input. He was on his own because he is a person who is interested in the matter; and he has personal contacts," he added.

"We did not make any objection; there was no officialdom about it. It takes the pressure off the Malaysian Government because during Thak-

sin's time it was a very sensitive issue."

Dr Mahathir had claimed recently that he had been told to back off from his role as an intermediary.

However, he declined to reveal who had issued the advice.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has been invited for talks in Phuket next month with his Thai counterpart Surayud Chulanont.