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Samak, Abdullah to discuss rice import

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SEPANG: Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundravej arrived here yesterday evening for a two-day official visit to Malaysia.

He came by commercial flight from Bangkok and was received by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Utama Dr Rais Yatim, his deputy Datuk Chor Chee Heung and other senior officials at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Samak's visit is part of an introductory tour of Southeast Asian capitals following his appointment as prime minister on Jan 28.

He was accompanied by the kingdom's Minister at the Prime Minister's Office, Jakrapob Penkair, as well as other senior government officials.

Samak had dinner with about 100 local and Thai guests at the Thai embassy in Jalan Ampang.

Today, Samak will have a restricted meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

This will be followed by a delegation meeting.

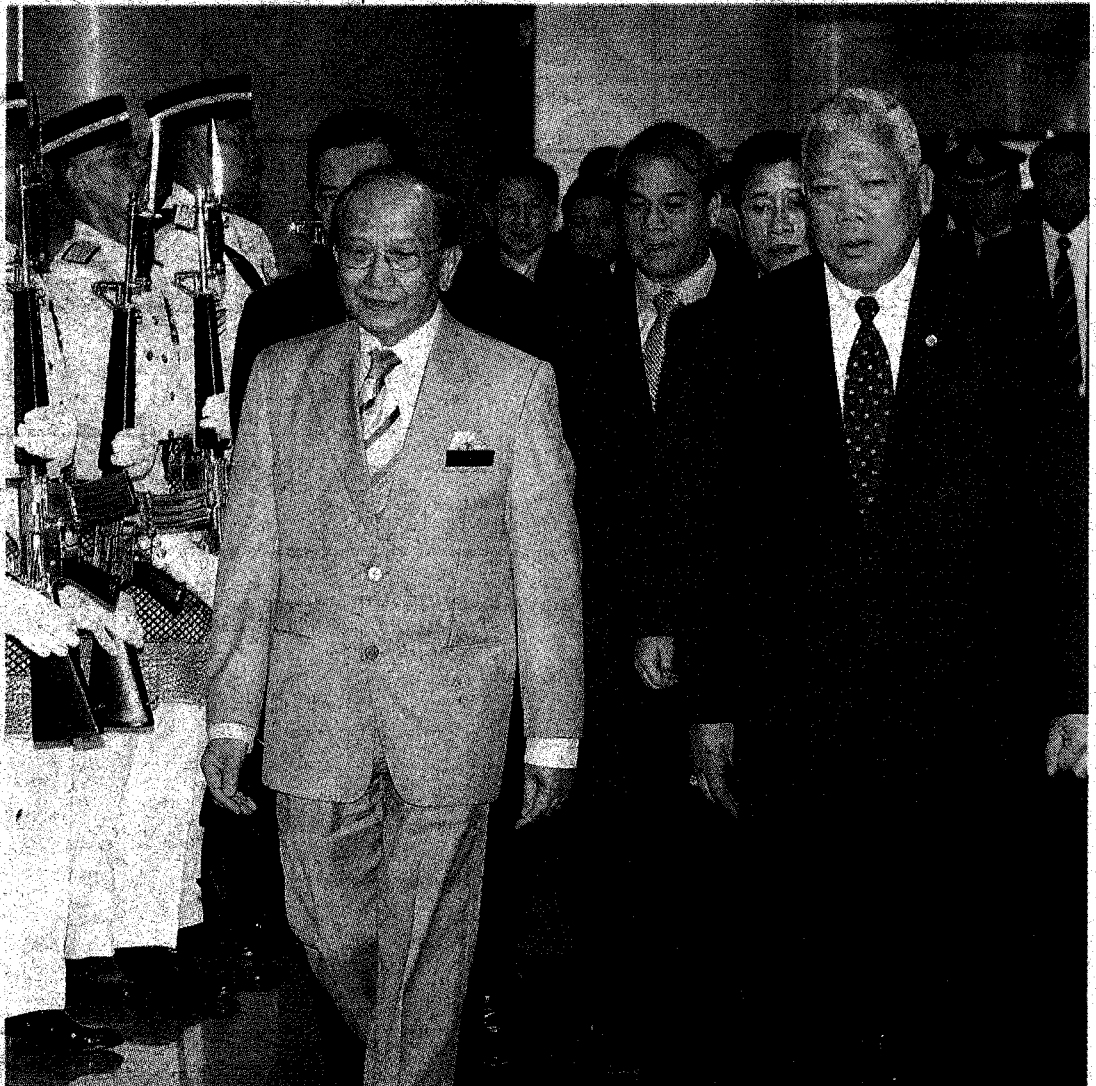
Abdullah will host an official luncheon in honour of his guest at Putrajaya, a statement from Wisma Putra said.

The Thai prime minister will also have an audience with Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin at Istana Negara in the afternoon.

Samak and his delegation are expected to return to Thailand this evening.

Samak and Abdullah are expected to discuss issues of mutual interest, including rice import from Thailand.

There have been numerous exchanges of visits by leaders of Malaysia and Thailand, with Abdullah making an official visit to Thailand from Feb 11 to 13 last year.



Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundravej (right) accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim and other officials, on his arrival at the KLIA yesterday.

This was reciprocated by the official visit of former Thai prime minister General Surayud Chulanont from Aug 20 to 22 last year.

Bilateral trade between Malaysia and Thailand has grown

from RM50.11 billion in 2006 to RM55.13 billion in 2007.

Malaysian exports also rose from RM27.16 billion in 2006 to RM28.99 billion in 2007.

Imports from Thailand also registered impressive growth, rising

from RM22.91 billion in 2006 to RM 26.11 billion in 2007.

Malaysian investments in Thailand have surpassed the RM1 billion mark in 2007, while Thai investments in Malaysia totalled RM128 million in 2007.