

# PM IN VIETNAM TO BOOST TRADE TIES

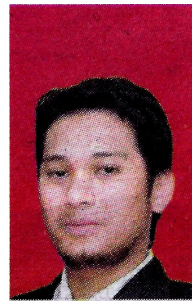
**Three-day visit will boost opportunities to raise trade to US\$15 billion, says envoy**

HANOI

PRIME Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's three-day official visit here starting today is expected to boost relations between Malaysia and Vietnam, and open up opportunities to increase bilateral trade to the US\$15 billion mark next year.

This will be an increase of US\$2 billion, compared with the US\$13.3 billion in bilateral trade last year.

Malaysian ambassador to Viet-



**WAN  
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nam, Datuk Shariffah Norhana Syed Mustafa, said the official visit was at the invitation of Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

It will be Dr Mahathir's first official visit to the socialist republic after being appointed as prime minister for the second time last year.

The last official visit he made to Vietnam was when he attended the Asean conference in his capacity as prime minister in 1998.

Shariffah Norhana said Dr Mahathir's visit this time was to boost bilateral relations, which had been established 46 years ago on March 30, 1973.

Last year, Malaysian exports to Vietnam totalled US\$8.48 billion, while imports from Vietnam totalled US\$4.77 billion.

"Malaysia is Vietnam's 11th biggest trade partner, Vietnam is Malaysia's 13th biggest trade partner in the world and fourth biggest in Asean after Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia.

"Malaysia is the eighth biggest investor country in Vietnam, with investments amounting to US\$12.48 billion last year," she

said here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir will be accompanied by his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, and they are expected to arrive at 5.20 p m t o d a y (6.20pm Malaysian time).

Tomorrow, Dr Mahathir will be accorded an official welcoming ceremony at the Presidential Palace, followed by a meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart.

Shariffah Norhana said: "Both leaders are expected to discuss bilateral relations and ways to promote new collaborations in trade and industry, security, education and agriculture, in addition to regional and global issues.

"The issue of Vietnamese fish-

ermen encroaching on Malaysian waters is expected to be discussed too."

On Wednesday, Dr Mahathir will visit the Hoa Lac Hi-Tech Park and is slated to give a speech to university students on "Malaysia's Preparation Towards Industrial Revolution 4.0".

He will visit an exhibition of Vietnamese-made cars, namely VinFast models Lux SA 2.0, Lux SA(A) 2.0 and Fadil 1.5.

"Dr Mahathir and his wife will visit the Noi Bai Industrial Zone, which is managed by Noi Bai Development Corporation Limited, a Malaysian-Vietnamese joint venture company comprising Vista Spectrum Sdn Bhd and Urban Infrastructure Development Investment Corporation Vietnam.

"During his visit to Vietnam in 1996, he launched the groundbreaking of the Noi Bai Industrial Zone."



**Datuk Shariffah  
Norhana Syed  
Mustafa**