

Thai PM proposes Malaysia-Thai direct communication channel

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BANGKOK, March 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha has proposed the setting up of a "hotline" to serve as a direct communication channel for Malaysian and Thailand officials to discuss matters related to security affairs.

According to government spokesman Lt Gen Weerachon Sukhondhapatipak, the Prime Minister brought up the proposal during his meeting with Malaysia's Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein at the Government House yesterday.

Hishammuddin was in Thailand to attend the 54th Malaysia-Thailand General Border Committee (GBC) meeting.

"The Prime Minister said that both sides (Malaysia and Thailand) are ready to tighten their (bilateral) ties to better deal with various security threats," said the spokesman in a statement on the outcome of the meeting between Prayut and the Malaysian Defence Minister.

Weerachon said Prayut also told his Malaysian visitor that current security environment was complex and multidimensional, spanning wide-ranging issues related to terrorism, transnational crime, politics, economy, cyber and financial security.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister he said, also expressed his satisfaction with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on security cooperation by both countries' National Security Council (NSC) last January.

Besides matters relating to security affairs, Prayut and Hishammuddin also discussed the ongoing southern Thai peace talks, with the Prime Minister applauding the constructive role played by Kuala Lumpur, said the spokesman.

The Prime Minister according to him, had told the Malaysian Defence Minister that peace talks where Malaysia acted as the facilitator was currently at the confidence building stage and needed more time.

The government and the opposing side, which he referred to as "the party with differing views " said Prayut, were also still discussing the setting up of a Safety Zone (SZ) in one of the districts in southern Thailand.

On bilateral trade, Weerachon said Prayut had expressed his wish for Malaysia and Thailand to elevate their ties to become strategic partners rather than competitors, to promote and increase trade between the two countries.

He also asked Malaysia to support Thailand's agricultural products and help to keep the rubber prices from dropping.

The Prime Minister, according to Weerachon, would bring up the issues he discussed with Hishammuddin for further discussion with his Malaysian counterpart, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak during ASEAN-Australia Special Summit in Sydney where both of them would attend beginning this Sunday.

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