

Keating gets invite to visit Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has invited his Australian counterpart Paul Keating to visit Malaysia.

Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Senator Gareth Evans said today Keating was keen on the visit to build on their meeting at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit in Bogor, Indonesia, last year.

He said, however, Keating was only expected to make the visit after the election in Australia, which is scheduled to be held by May next year.

"If the election is concluded this year it is possible the visit can take place during the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition 95 (Lima 95)," he told a Press conference at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR).

Earlier, Evans had given a lecture and took part in a question-and-answer session organised by the IDFR. He left for Bangkok today.

Keating caused an uproar when he described Dr Mahathir as a "recalcitrant" when the latter turned down an invitation by US President Bill Clinton to attend the Apec meeting at Seattle two years ago.

The two Prime Ministers met for the first time since the uproar at Bogor.

Evans arrived here on Friday for a four-day official visit where he met with Dr Mahathir and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Foreign Minister also visited Penang and met Chief Minister Dr Koh Tsu Koon. They discussed the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT).

Evans said he had discussed regional economic co-operation, security issues and Apec during his meeting with Dr Mahathir on Saturday.

"It was an excellent meeting and augurs well for our future relations," he said.

Replying to a question, Evans said an Australian company had submitted a tender to build patrol boats for the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN).

It was reported that Melbourne-based Transfield Shipbuilding had submitted a bid for the job.

Transfield, which is building 10 frigates for the Australian and New Zealand navies, is the only Australian company bidding for the job.

Evans said he discussed the company's bid during his talks with senior Malaysian officials.

He said the company offered a competitive bid and gave explicit contractual commitment to meet Malaysian requirements.

These are having a significant local content, technology transfer and local industry involvement in the project.

"We hope the bid will be successful," he said.