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MAHATHIR MEETING WORLD PRESS AND TOP BUSINESSMEN

Mahathir - Talks

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HONG KONG, Oct 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who arrived here today, will meet the world press and chief executive officers of international companies during his three-day visit to this Asia's financial hub.

No official functions were scheduled for the Prime Minister today but tomorrow, he will address two distinguished gatherings, some 150 foreign journalists at the Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) luncheon and over dinner, he will speak to top businessmen and senior politicians who are gathered here for the Europe/East Asia Economic Forum.

Hong Kong is the base of the largest group of foreign journalists covering the Far East representing over 200 newspapers, magazines, news agencies and other media organisations worldwide.

FCC president Steve Vines told Bernama that the club had long been waiting for the chance to have the Malaysian Prime Minister to address its regular luncheon talk series but this was not possible because of Dr Mahathir's busy schedule.

+So when we heard that he is coming to Hong Kong to address the Europe/East Asia Economic Forum, we grab the chance to invite him to be our guest and we are honoured that he has accepted our invitation,+ he said.  
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Vines said the FCC, established in the 1930's, had not requested the Prime Minister to speak on specific matters but journalists expected Dr Mahathir's speech to reflect his concern and critical views on a number of issues.

During the question-and-answer session following the talks, Vines said foreign journalists based here were expected to take up with the Prime Minister the Malaysian government's recent move to encourage international media organisations to set up their base in Kuala Lumpur, especially after China assumes sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997.

Vines said more foreign news organisations would be keen to relocate to Kuala Lumpur if the Malaysian authorities could remove some of the restrictions to facilitate their operations.

+Al though we are based in Hong Kong, we are covering the whole region. Journalists will be concerned if certain regulations do not, enable a free flow of information,+ he added. -- More

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He said **since the** Malaysian government had plans to make Kuala Lumpur regional base for foreign correspondents, they were keen to know if the question of getting work permit; could be simplified and not as tough as present.

Dr Mahathir will address some 380 corporate and political decision-makers at the Europe/East Asia Economic Forum.

It is organised by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum, the foremost institution integrating leaders from business, government and the sciences into a creative global partnership for economic and social progress.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz will also speak at the forum on Thursday and Friday.

Before his lunch and talk at the FCC, Dr Mahathir will call on Hong Kong Governor Christopher Patten at Government House.

Earlier on arrival at the Kai Tak International Airport, Dr Mahathir and his wife Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali were welcomed by Hong Kong's Director of Protocol V.L. Warrington and Malaysian Commissioner here Datuk Shahrul Hashri.

Tonight, Dr Mahathir will attend a dinner hosted by Hong Kong-based Malaysian tycoon Robert Kuok, whose business spans across Hong Kong, China and Malaysia.

He will meet the staff and family members of the Malaysian Commission over breakfast on Thursday before leaving for a week-long visit to Japan.

-- Bernama

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