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from Abdul Rahman Sulaiman

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KUNMING, June 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here last night to begin a two-day tour of China's southwestern province of Yunnan on the third leg of his 10-day official visit of the republic.

The prime minister and his wife, Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali were received at the airport by the Governor of Yunnan, He Zhidong, the Vice-Governor, Liu Jind, and other senior members of the provincial government.

Also in the prime minister's delegation are Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik, Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Taib Mahmud, Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaacob and Penang Chief Minister Dr Koh Tse Koon.

Accompanying the prime minister's official party is a 143-member business delegation.

Tomorrow, Dr Mahathir will hold talks with Zhidong at the hotel where he is staying here, visit a local Drug Rehabilitation Centre and tour the famous stone forest outside this provincial capital.

The Yunnan province has a population of 37 million and frontiers stretching 4,060km with Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam. -- more

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Before coming here, the prime minister visited the Institute of Islamic Theology in Urumqi, the capital of the Muslim dominated Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwestern China.

The region, the largest in the country, has a population of 15 million.

Dr Mahathir donated RM10,000 to the institute and joined the locals for Friday prayers at the institute's mosque. -- Bernama.

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