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Mahathir-Zimbabwe:

Mahathir - overseas trips

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KUALA LUMPUR, April 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will make a five-day official visit to Zimbabwe from April 27 to increase economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.

His 60-member delegation will include 45 businessmen.

Dr Mahathir, who will be accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah, will hold talks with President Robert Mugabe.

Besides trade and economic relations, the two leaders will also exchange views on the G-15, Commonwealth and the current situation in South Africa.

Foreign Ministry deputy secretary-general Datuk Abdul Halim Ali told a press briefing here today they would witness the signing of three agreements on avoidance of double taxation, investment guarantee and air services.

This will be Dr Mahathir's second visit to Zimbabwe. He was last in Harare in 1991 to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). -- more

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▼20/04/15-48MST

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The officials in the delegation will include Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

Malaysian banker and corporate leader Tan Sri Azman Hashim will head the private sector group.

Halim said the presence of the large number of Malaysian businessmen reflected the desire of Malaysia to further develop trade and business cooperation with Zimbabwe.

The present volume of trade between the two countries is small, totalling RM19.4 million in 1993 with the trade balance in Malaysia's favour.

Malaysia's RM12 million exports to Zimbabwe comprised mainly natural rubber, cocoa and petroleum products and it imported mostly tobacco, asbestos and steel products. -- more

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The highlight of the visit will be the opening of the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair by Dr Mahathir -- the first time a non-African leader is being given the honour -- in Bulawayo, 450km from the capital of Harare.

Fifteen countries will take part in the trade expo with Malaysia represented by 14 organisations.

Among them are Sime Darby, Edaran Otomobil Malaysia, Berjaya Group, HMW Corporation, Silverstone Tyre and Palm Oil Export Promotion Council.

Halim said several Malaysian companies are bidding for major projects in Zimbabwe, including airport construction by YTL Corp, communications by TRT and the supply of 300,000 tonnes of petroleum products by Petro. --

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