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MAHATHIR LEAVES FOR MANILA TO ATTEND APEC FORUM

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 23 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad left for Manila today to attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum tomorrow.

The Prime Minister, accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, departed from the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang at 8.10am.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob and Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman were among the VIPs present at the airport to send off the Prime Minister.

Besides Dr Mahathir, other heads of government to attend the one-day forum at Subic Bay, north of Manila, are US president Bill Clinton, President Suharto of Indonesia, President Jiang Zemin of China, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien and host president Fidel Ramos of the Philippines.

Apec, incepted in 1989, consists of the United States, Australia, Brunei, Chile, China, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Canada, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand.

Dr Mahathir said yesterday Malaysia will voice the concern of smaller countries on the trade liberalisation policy of Apec when leaders of the 18-member grouping meet in Manila on Monday.

He said the policy, scheduled to be implemented by the developed countries by the year 2010 with the rest to follow suit in 2020, had caused great concern among the weaker economies. -- BERNAMA

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