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PM-Arrival

PM ARRIVES IN ZIMBABWE FOR SOLAR SUMMIT

By: K. C. Leong

HARARE, Sept 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here today for a five-day visit to Zimbabwe during which he will attend the World Solar Summit beginning Monday.

The Prime Minister will also attend tomorrow's inaugural meeting of the World Solar Commission as one of the 16 members of the commission which is chaired by Zimbabwean President and summit host Robert Mugabe.

Dr Mahathir is staying at the Harare Sheraton Hotel which is adjacent to the Harare International Conference Centre, the venue for the meetings.

Dr Mahathir and Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie, who is also in the delegation, will attend a briefing tomorrow morning by Malaysian officials on progress reached so far in preliminary meetings which have taken place here this week.

The briefing will be given by Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Secretary General Datuk Nuraizah Abdul Hamid, who had led the Malaysian senior officials at the pre-summit discussions.

She told Malaysian reporters earlier that progress had been smooth so far with agreement having been reached on almost all the main points of the two main summit documents -- the Harare Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development and the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 (WSP).

The Harare Declaration is a statement by the nations participating in the summit, initiated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) three years ago, to launch a programme for global solar activities.

The activities themselves are outlined in the World Solar Programme, a decade-long blueprint of action plans at the national, regional and international levels.

The Solar Commission meanwhile has as one of its major objectives providing political leadership and guidance to achieve the objectives of the summit, especially in the implementation of the WSP.

Apart from President Mugabe and Dr Mahathir, the other members of the commission include President Suharto of Indonesia, Chinese President Jiang Zemin, South African President Nelson Mandela, King Juan Carlos of Spain, and President H.D. Deve Gowda of India.

The others are President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, President Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia, President Jose Maria Figueres Olsen of Costa Rica, President Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari of Pakistan, Chancellor Franz Vranitzky of Austria, Jamaican Prime Minister P.J. Patterson, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

However, not all the members of the commission are coming for the meetings and actual participation at the summit is expected to fall short of the 100 countries expected earlier.

Summit officials say that around 80 delegations have so far arrived, including delegations representing international organisations.

Nevertheless, enthusiasm is high, especially among developing countries, that proposed activities to expand development and usage of renewable energy sources so as solar, wind, wave, biomas, geothermal and mini-hydro power could provide many of the answers to problems they face in providing power to their populations, especially in rural and isolated areas.

This upbeat mood is further enhanced by the strong commitment being

provided by emerging nations like Malaysia to these activities despite its energy-rich national situation and high penetration rate of rural electrification. -- BERNAMA

KCL SJ AO