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PM-Solar

PM TO ADDRESS WORLD SOLAR SUMMIT IN ZIMBABWE

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will deliver a keynote address at the the World Solar Summit to be held in Zimbabwe from Saturday to seek ways to step up usage of renewable energy sources.

The Prime Minister is among more than a dozen world leaders who are expected to address the meeting, organised in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to leave for the Zimbabwean capital, Harare, on Friday at the head of the Malaysian delegation which will also include Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie.

The conference officially kicks off on Saturday when the World Solar Commission holds its inaugural meeting. Dr Mahathir is expected to address the meeting which will be preceded by meetings on Thursday of senior officials from the 100-odd countries expected to gather in Harare for the summit.

The two-day summit, to be opened by Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe next Monday, is expected to endorse proposals worked out by senior officials and the commission to further develop solar energy programmes around the world between 1996 and 2005 under Unesco's 20-year World Solar Programme.

Other world leaders reported to have confirmed their participation at the summit include South African President Nelson Mandela and Chinese President Jian Zemin.

Although touted as the World Solar Summit, the meeting is expected to consider all renewable energy sources, such as wind power, thermal energy and hydro-electric power.

Unesco says that renewable energy could provide the best solution to the problem of bringing electricity to an estimated 70 per cent of the people in developing countries who still do not enjoy electricity supplies.

It adds that 18 per cent of the world's primary energy now comes from renewable sources. However, this is mainly made up of firewood, and while it can technically be described as renewable, in places where dependence on firewood is high, trees and even scrub are being depleted faster than they can be replaced.

The second major source of renewable energy presently exploited is hydro power while contributions from sources such as solar, wind, geothermal or wave power are negligible. -- BERNAMA

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