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Annan arrives for three-day visit to boost relations

SUBANG JAYA, Sun. - United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan arrived tonight for a three-day visit to boost relations between the world body and Malaysia.

Coming from the Organisation of Islamic Conference in Teheran, Iran, Annan arrived just after 9pm at the Sultan Abdul Aziz International Airport here after a stopover in Kuwait.

He was accompanied by his wife, Nane Annan, and officials from the UN Secretariat.

Annan and his entourage were greeted on arrival by Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Dr Leo Michael Toyad and his wife Datin Matilda Toyad.

During his visit, which is on the invitation of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the couple will have an audience with the Yang Dipertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar and the Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah.

Annan will also meet Dr Mahathir, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, and Asean leaders, who are here for the Asean informal summit.

Aside from reinforcing ties between the UN and Malaysia, Annan is expected to reinforce the message that the UN still matters and deserves the full support of its members.

Annan will attend briefings by the Economic Planning Unit and the Multimedia Development Corporation and deliver a talk on the UN's role in global and regional matters, organised by the Institute for Diplomacy and Foreign Relations.

He will also visit the UN office here and meet members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Association of Malaysia, before departing on Wednesday.

Annan assumed the position of UN Secretary-General in January, pledging his commitment to wide-ranging reforms.

And his visit comes just over a month after having won widespread support at the UN's 52nd General Assembly for a proposal to do just that. This is the second visit by a UN Secretary-General to Malaysia. The first was in 1985 by Javier Perez de Cuellar.

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