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Mahathir-arrival

DR MAHATHIR ARRIVES FOR D-8 SUMMIT

By: Mokhtar Hussain

ISTANBUL, June 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here today from London to attend tomorrow's inaugural summit of the group of eight Islamic Developing Countries (D-8).

Dr Mahathir, who is accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, was met on arrival by Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and senior Turkish officials.

Dr Mahathir later called on his Turkish counterpart Necmettin Erbakan.

The D-8, formed to act as a catalyst for closer and meaningful collaboration among Muslim countries, was mooted by Erbakan.

Dr Mahathir later attended a dinner hosted by Turkish president Suleyman Demirel in honour of the D-8 heads of state or government.

Suleyman is scheduled to officiate at tomorrow's summit at the Ciragan Palace Hotel here, situated by the Bosphorus Straits which separates the continents of Asia and Europe.

The leaders of the grouping are expected to sign a Summit Declaration in the evening to be followed by a joint news conference.

Besides Malaysia and Turkey, the other D-8 member countries are Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Erbakan had expressed hope that the D-8 would grow into a strong trade grouping that could become a viable counterpart to the G-7 established by the industrial states.

Foreign ministers of the eight member countries, who met here in January to discuss the formation of the D-8, agreed to set aside political ideologies and instead concentrate on economic cooperation to ensure the success of the grouping which has a combined population of 650 million.

While here, Dr Mahathir is expected to also hold talks with other leaders attending the summit, including President Suharto of Indonesia and prime ministers Sheikh Hasina Wajed of Bangladesh and Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan. -- Bernama

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