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Dr Mahathir arrives in Chile for three-day visit

Zainul Arifin in Santiago, Chile

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived in Chile on Sunday to begin a three-day visit to the South American country.

Arriving from Cuba, Dr Mahathir was met at the Arturo Merino Benitez International Airport by Chile's Minister of Foreign Affairs Jose Miguel Insulza and Malaysia's Ambassador to Chile Lily Zachariah.

It is Dr Mahathir's second visit to the country, his first being in 1991.

He was received by Chilean President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle at an official ceremony yesterday which included wreath-laying at the Liberation Monument.

After a bilateral meeting with Frei, they took a 15-minute journey to San Bernardo where they attended the opening of the train station.

The train station was redeveloped jointly by the Malaysia South-South Corporation and Chilean parties.

Today, Dr Mahathir will attend the opening of the 12th General Meeting of the Pacific Economic Co-operation Council. He will address delegates of the meeting at a dinner in the evening.

He will also be visiting Pirque, 45km south of Santiago, to attend the formal announcement of the start of activities of El Principal SA, a company incorporated with Chilean and Malaysian financing.

On Wednesday, Dr Mahathir will leave for Uruguay, for a one-day visit before heading for Argentina.

Chile, a fellow member of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation forum is one of the fastest growing economies in South America with a gross domestic product of 7.1 per cent last year.

It has also been invited to join the North American Free Trade Agreement.

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