

08 JAN 1997

Hashimoto-Arrival

JAPANESE PM ARRIVES FOR TWO-DAY VISIT (With pix)

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 8 (Bernama) -- Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto arrived here today for a two-day visit to Malaysia to enhance bilateral relations between the two countries.

He was accorded an official welcome at Parliament Square where he was greeted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

After the national anthems of both countries were played, Hashimoto inspected a 105-member guard-of-honour mounted by the Royal Malay Regiment First Battalion led by Mej Mohd Rafizi Shariff.

Cabinet ministers and members of the foreign diplomatic corps were introduced to the Japanese leader who later left for a meeting with Dr Mahathir at the Prime Minister's office.

Hashimoto is accompanied by a 72-member delegation including Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Kaoru Yosano and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Shunji Yanai.

He is on the second leg of a five-nation Southeast Asian tour after Brunei. He will also visit Indonesia, Vietnam and Singapore.

Earlier on arrival at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang, the Japanese leader was received by Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Science, Technology and Environment Deputy Minister Datuk Abu Bakar Daud who is the minister-in-attendance.

Hashimoto is scheduled to have an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar at Istana Negara after his talks with Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir will host a dinner in honour of the Japanese leader tonight at Sri Perdana.

Hashimoto went ahead with his mission to strengthen links with Asean countries, despite the three-week-old hostage stand-off at the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, Peru. -- BERNAMA

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