

15 SEP 1997

Kumaratunga-Arrival

KUMARATUNGA ARRIVES FOR FOUR-DAY VISIT

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 15 (Bernama) -- Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga arrived here today for a four-day official visit to Malaysia, the first by the country's head of state since both countries established diplomatic relations in 1957.

Under a blanket of haze which has been hanging over Malaysia in the past weeks and amid tight security, the special aircraft carrying the president touched down at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang near here at 4.25pm.

Kumaratunga and her entourage were met on arrival by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and National Unity and Social Development Minister Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail, who is minister-in-attendance.

Also present to greet her was Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, who arrived here yesterday.

The president, who is here especially to boost trade relations between Sri Lanka and Malaysia, was later whisked to Parliament Square for the ceremonial welcoming ceremony.

While here, she will have an audience with Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar and hold talks with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

President Kumaratunga is expected to deliver a keynote address to prospective investors at a luncheon hosted by the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (NCCIM) and speak at a public talk organised by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations.

An investment seminar organised by the NCCIM in collaboration with the Sri Lankan Board of Investment will also be held during the visit.

Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Malaysia Dr Warnasena Rasaputram said Malaysia exported RM397 million worth of goods to Sri Lanka last year while Sri Lanka's exports to Malaysia amounted to RM66 million over the same period.

The last visit by a Sri Lankan head of government to Malaysia was made by Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake back in 1967.

At Parliament Square, Kumaratunga was greeted by Tuanku Ja'afar and Dr Mahathir.

She then inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by four officers and 103 men of the First Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment led by Mej Hamdi Abdul Rahman.

A 21-gun salute was also fired.

Kumaratunga later met Cabinet ministers, senior government officials and heads of foreign mission who attended the ceremony.

She then left for her hotel where she received Dr Mahathir

Tonight, she will attend a state banquet at Istana Negara. -- BERNAMA
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