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MAHATHIR LEAVES FOR THREE AFRICAN NATION TOUR

KUALA LUMPUR, May 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today left for a week-long visit to three African countries.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail were among those present at Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang to send off Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

Also present were Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed and Land and Cooperative Development Minister Datuk Osu Sukam.

Chief Secretary to the Government Datuk Abdul Halim Ali, several deputy ministers and parliamentary secretaries were also at the airport to see him off.

Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie and several corporate figures are in Dr Mahathir's entourage.

Dr Mahathir will begin his three-nation African tour by visiting Malawi followed by Botswana and South Africa.

Malaysia-Malawi bilateral trade only amounted to RM2.55 million last year and RM1.35 million with Botswana.

In South Africa, Dr Mahathir will be honoured by President Nelson Mandela by conferring on him the "Order of Good Hope", the country's highest award. -- BERNAMA

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