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Mahathir-Summit

MAHATHIR TO ATTEND D-8 SUMMIT IN ISTANBUL

By: Mokhtar Hussain

ISTANBUL, June 13 (Bernama) -- After an encouraging mission to Europe to promote the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's next stop is this Turkish city where he will attend an inaugural Islamic economic summit dubbed the D-8, beginning on Sunday.

The Prime Minister will be among the the leaders of eight Muslim countries to attend the meeting officially known as the Group of Eight Islamic Developing Countries (D-8) summit.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, are scheduled to arrive here tomorrow at 4pm (9pm Malaysian time).

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will accompany Dr Mahathir at the summit.

Apart from Malaysia and Turkey, the other member countries are Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria and Pakistan.

The D-8 is the brainchild of Necmettin Erbakan who mooted the idea in July 1996 after taking over the premiership. He had said that the grouping was not an alternative to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

He said the OIC, in its current form, could not achieve much and has to be restructured while Islamic countries should rapidly increase trade among themselves and thus add muscle to their cooperation.

Abdullah, who attended a ministerial meeting in January to discuss the formation of D-8, said the grouping could become a catalyst for revitalising the OIC and give meaning to Islamic cooperation and solidarity.

A Wisma Putra official said that in order to ensure the success of the grouping, Malaysia felt that D-8 should focus on "practical and realisable projects" to avoid having white elephants.

He said Malaysia also felt that whatever project to be implemented by the D-8 should be opened to other Muslim and non-Muslim countries.

The secretariat of the D-8 had been set up in Istanbul and every member country had been given entrusted tasks based on the their respective strength.

The official said Malaysia was expected to share its experience in privatisation, Islamic banking and insurance among the member countries.

Projects for rural development is assigned to Bangladesh, trade (Egypt), human resource development (Indonesia), science and technology and information (Iran), agriculture (Pakistan), industry and health (Turkey).

Cooperation among the D-8 grouping would be based on six principles -- peace instead of conflict; dialogue instead of confrontation; cooperation instead of exploitation; justice instead of double-standard; equality instead of discrimination; and democracy instead of oppression.

Proponents of the D-8, which has a total population of 650 million, see the grouping as similar to the group of seven (G7) industrial nations and group of 15 developing countries (G15).

During his stay here, Dr Mahathir will also take the opportunity to hold talks with several leaders attending the summit. He is scheduled to call on Turkish president Suleyman Demiral and Erbakan.

The Prime Minister is scheduled to leave for Beirut on Monday for a three-day official visit to Lebanon. -- BERNAMA

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