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Pakistan PM arrives for three-day visit

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif arrived today to begin a three-day visit to Malaysia aimed at consolidating economic ties between the two countries.

He was received at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

Also present were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Deputy Home Minister Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali, who is the minister-in-attendance.

Nawaz is accompanied by his wife Begum Kulsoom and a 50-member entourage comprising ministers and leading businessmen representing different sectors of the Pakistani economy.

His entourage includes Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan, Commerce Minister Mohamad Ishaq Dar, Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz and chairman of Pakistan's Privatisation Commission, Khwaja Asif.

The visit by Nawaz, who became Prime Minister for the second time in February this year, is to reciprocate a similar visit by Dr Mahathir to Pakistan in April.

From the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, the Pakistani leader was driven to Parliament Square for an official welcoming ceremony.

Tomorrow, Nawaz will witness an agreements signing ceremony after a delegations meeting at the Prime Minister's Department before going for Friday prayers at Masjid Negara.

He will also be briefed by Economic Planning Unit officials between courtesy calls by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Economic Adviser to the Government Tun Daim Zainuddin.

Dr Mahathir will host a dinner for Nawaz at Sri Perdana tomorrow.

Other highlights of Nawaz's trip are a visit to Intan, Bukit Kiara, and a keynote address he will deliver at a luncheon hosted by the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia.

Balance of trade between the two countries stood at US\$650 million (RM1.7 billion) for the 1995-96 period. Pakistan imports from Malaysia totalled US\$708 million (RM1.85 billion) while exports amounted to US\$56 million (RM146.7 million) for the same period.

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