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PM to hold talks with several heads of states

Jailani Harun in Istanbul

ISTANBUL, Thurs: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who will attend the inaugural summit meeting of the Developing Eight (D-8) here, is scheduled to hold bilateral talks with several participating heads of government.

Barely one hour after his scheduled arrival on Saturday afternoon, Dr Mahathir will attend the pre-council meeting before calling on his Turkish counterpart Dr Necmettin Erbakan.

Dr Mahathir, who will be accompanied by wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, will then receive calls by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed at the Ciragan Palace Hotel here, where they are expected to discuss various issues with regards to the D-8 and bilateral ties.

In the evening, he will attend a dinner hosted by Turkish President Suleyman Demirel for the heads of state/government and their delegations. During the summit meeting, Dr Mahathir and the heads of government will deliver their speeches on the inaugural formation of the D-8.

Among issues to be discussed during the meeting are trade and economic cooperation, globalisation, the Islamic world and other economic-related agenda. It was reported that areas of cooperation include trade and investment, human resources development, science and technology, tourism, communication and transportation.

Except for Egypt and Nigeria, all eight members of the grouping are being represented by their heads, including President Suharto of Indonesia and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan.

Dr Mahathir will also hold separate meetings with Suharto and Nawaz Sharif on Monday before leaving for Beirut in the afternoon.

Erbakan mooted the idea to form the D-8 last year to accelerate economic growth in Muslim countries, particularly in the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is scheduled to arrive here tomorrow morning, has attended two ministerial meetings here and in Kuala Lumpur to prepare the agenda of the inaugural meeting.

Meanwhile, the D-8 summit meeting started with the opening of the Culture Days by Erbakan at the historical Bab-i Humayun Garden of Topkapi Palace here yesterday.

In his opening speech, Erbakan said it is significant that the declaration of a new world based on the D-8 will be declared in Istanbul, "the capital of the world".

He also said that since the participants of the D-8 represent a total population of 800 million, "they are coming together in a way that would lay foundation for a new world based on peace".

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