

08/05/1998

Dr M has full agenda on dual-purpose Cairo visit

Syed Nadzri in Cairo

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be in Cairo today on a flurry of missions to enhance ties and promote Third World interests.

For the first part of his six-day stay, Dr Mahathir will attend functions lined up for an official visit (from today to Sunday), his first to Egypt in 14 years. And the Prime Minister will kill two birds with one stone by taking part in the eighth summit of the Group of 15 countries starting Monday.

An official welcome awaits Dr Mahathir when he arrives at the Cairo International Airport at 5pm local time (10pm Malaysian time). Tomorrow's busy schedule starts with a delegation meeting at the office of Egyptian Prime Minister Dr Kamal Ahmed Al Ganzoury.

Wisma Putra Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamed said yesterday that this meeting would lead to the signing of two bilateral agreements, one on information technology and one on religious affairs.

The day's highlight will be Dr Mahathir's dinner meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

But before that, he will speak at a business forum organised by the Arab-Malaysian Chamber of Commerce and open a Perodua showroom.

The motor showroom symbolises the encouraging sales in Egypt of the Perodua Kancil. It is understood that the 80 cars shipped here recently were snapped up in just a week, prompting local agents to order 120 more, which will arrive by the end of the month.

Dr Mahathir will be conferred an honorary doctorate of letters by the Al Azhar University on Sunday, a rare honour given by the world's oldest university to heads of government.

The Prime Minister is also scheduled to meet Malaysian students after this.

Dr Mahathir is expected to be a key figure at the G-15 summit which will be opened by Mubarak on Monday morning.

Taking off from where the Kuala Lumpur summit left, the Cairo summit will, among others, continue deliberations on developments in the international financial market.

It will also deal with problems encountered by developing countries in the multilateral trading system.

These two issues make up the main agenda of the three-day summit and are expected to figure prominently in the final communique to be issued on Wednesday.

The Cairo meeting is held out of turn because Jamaica, which was to be the next host after Kuala Lumpur, asked for a postponement because of elections.

It is unclear how many leaders will make it, but Egyptian officials are confident that this would be one of the best attended.

As with most other summits, leaders will spend one day in a retreat - in this case in Sharm es-Sheikh at the southern tip of Sinai - on Tuesday.

Apart from Malaysia and Egypt, the other members of G-15 are Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

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