

29 MAR 1998

Mahathir-Asem

DR MAHATHIR LEAVES FOR ASEM IN LONDON (pix)

KUALA LUMPUR, March 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight left for London to join leaders from Asia and the European Union (EU) at the Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) which starts Monday.

The three-day meeting will be attended by the 15 EU members, China, Japan, South Korea and all the Asean-member countries except Myanmar and Laos.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

They were seen off at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, in Subang by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Information Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Rahmat, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali, Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamad and senior government officials.

The coming meeting is the second in the Asem series. Its inaugural meeting was held in Bangkok in 1996.

Asean is hoping to push the idea of establishing an Asia-Europe Trade and Investment Fund to help renew faith among the European communities in the region's economy.

A separate statement on the Asian financial crisis was also expected to be sought by the Asian contingent at the end of the meeting.

The statement would note that the Asian problems was no longer just financial but also had political, security and maybe social implications as well.

Britain had proposed the formation of the Asem Trust Fund, in cooperation with the World Bank, to provide technical assistance for financial restructuring and to examine the social impact caused by the regional crisis.

The fund would also provide some financial assistance.

-- BERNAMA

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