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Mahathir-Asean

MAHATHIR ATTENDS ASEAN SUMMIT TOMORROW

By: E Sivabalan

HANOI, Dec 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to arrive here tomorrow on a four-day trip to Vietnam to attend the Sixth Asean Summit on Tuesday.

He is expected to be accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

Abdullah was here yesterday to attend the Asean Ministerial Meeting but cut short his trip to attend the special Umno assembly in Kuala Lumpur today.

Dr Mahathir would be joined at the two-day summit by other Asean leaders namely Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Indonesian President B.J.Habibie, Laotian Prime Minister Sisavath Keobounphanh, Gen Than Shwee of Myanmar, Philippine President Joseph Estrada, Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai and Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai.

The leaders are scheduled to attend an informal dinner hosted by the Vietnamese prime minister tomorrow.

The opening ceremony of the Hanoi summit will be held at the Ba Dinh Hall in the heart of the city on Tuesday.

After their closed-door meeting, the leaders will call on the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Le Kha Phieu.

On Wednesday, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen will join them in their discussions.

Cambodia has had an observer status in Asean since 1995. It is seeking a full membership at the summit here.

The Asean leaders are also expected to adopt the Hanoi Declaration and the Hanoi Plan of Action.

The leaders will then attend a luncheon with China's vice-president Hu Jintao, Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi and South Korean President Kim Dae Jung.

This is expected to be followed by the "Asean plus three" meeting between Asean and China, Japan and South Korea.

Dr Mahathir is also scheduled to hold talks with several of the leaders on the sidelines of the summit.

Tomorrow, he is scheduled to hold talks with Hun Sen and Khai. On Thursday, the prime minister will hold discussions with Goh and Hu Jintao.

Dr Mahathir is expected to launch a Petronas joint venture project here on Thursday before flying home.

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