

28 JAN 1999

WEF-MAHATHIR

DR MAHATHIR OPTS FOR TRAIN RIDE TO DAVOS

By: Yong Soo Heong

DAVOS (Switzerland), Jan 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed opted for a train ride to arrive here for the annual World Economic Forum (WEF) today.

After touching down at Zurich airport at 6.15 am Swiss time, the prime minister and his entourage were taken by coach to the Lanquart railway station on the outskirts of Zurich.

He arrived at the Davos-Dorf railway station at 10.02 am and was met by a group of Malaysian officials. They include Bank Negara adviser Datuk Mohamed Nor Yacob, Petronas chairman Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin and MAI Holdings chairman Ananda Krishnan.

After disembarking at the Davos-Dorf station, Dr Mahathir chose to walk across the road under heavy snowfall to Hotel Fluela, where he will stay for the next three days instead of taking the limousine which had been waiting for him.

Malaysian officials described the choice of the train ride by Dr Mahathir as being wise in view of the slippery road conditions caused by the persistent snowfall.

"Taking the train is certainly much safer than by road," one of them said.

The prime minister would have a relatively quiet day on his first day today and will later attend a private dinner hosted by Azizan.

Before his luncheon talk at the WEF tomorrow, he would have discussions with Tony Reis, chief executive officer of Swisscom International, a Swiss telecommunications firm which has a telephone joint venture in Digi Communications.

The theme of his WEF keynote address will be "Malaysia -- bouncing back from the brink" and there is already a lot of interest on his impending talk.

Other foreign dignitaries attending the WEF are United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, German chancellor Gerhard Schroder, US vice president Al Gore, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region chief executive Tung Chee Hwa, Singapore senior minister Lee Kuan Yew, Thai deputy prime minister Supachai Panitchpakdi and Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer.

Tomorrow afternoon, Dr Mahathir will attend a WEF brainstorming session in which he is expected to talk about the road ahead for Malaysia.

On Saturday, the prime minister will have a breakfast meeting with Swiss bankers, fund managers and business leaders.

He is expected to meet several foreign government officials in bilateral talks and the list is being finalised.

The prime minister will leave for Kuala Lumpur on Sunday and is expected to arrive at the KL International Airport by 8 am on Monday. --

BERNAMA

SHY MFJ