

28 FEB 1999

Mahathir-Arrival

DR MAHATHIR ARRIVES AT DHAKA FOR D-8 SUMMIT

DHAKA, Feb 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here this evening to attend the second summit of the group of eight Islamic developing countries (D-8) beginning Monday.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, was met on arrival at the Zia International Airport, here, by Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Also on hand to welcome him were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and Malaysian ambassador to Bangladesh Datuk Zulkifli Abdul Rahman.

The D-8, set up in Istanbul in June 1997 and grouping Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey, aims to improve economic cooperation through manageable and concrete projects.

Four heads of state and government will participate at the two-day summit.

Besides Dr Mahathir, the other leaders are President Suleyman Demirel of Turkey, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan and Bangladesh's Hasina.

Iran will be represented by its First Vice-President, Dr Hassan Habibi, Indonesia by its Minister for People's Welfare and Poverty Eradication Haryano Suyono and Egypt by its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amre M. Moussa.

Representatives from Nigeria were absent from the preparatory meetings over the past few days due to their elections back home but summit organisers said an official would arrive tomorrow for the meeting.

Malaysia, charged with coordinating the development of Islamic finance and banking, has made significant inroads in promoting joint ventures in Islamic insurance or takaful.

It is now working to take this a step further by promoting Islamic reinsurance or the retakaful business whereby it has asked D-8 members to take up equity in Asean Re-Takaful (L) Ltd, the retakaful joint-venture company with Malaysian, Singaporean and Indonesia interests in Labuan.

Syed Hamid Albar said yesterday that Malaysia's push for the retakaful business to be developed within the D-8 was expected to be included in the Dhaka Declaration to be issued at the end of the summit.

Besides deliberations on the D-8 where Dr Mahathir is expected to deliver a speech after the opening ceremony, the prime minister is scheduled to hold bilateral talks with Hasina tomorrow before the summit.

His programme tomorrow starts in the morning where he will leave by helicopter to visit the Savar Smriti Shoudha memorial.

He will then return to the Sheraton Hotel for the bilateral with Hasina and attend the summit in the afternoon.

Dr Mahathir will leave for home on March 3.

-- BERNAMA

MR JK