

16 SEP 1999

Mahathir-Labuan

MAHATHIR GETS ROUSING WELCOME IN LABUAN

LABUAN, Sept 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived to a rousing welcome here for a one-day visit to this duty-free Federal Territory island and off-shore financial centre.

Dr Mahathir was met on arrival by Labuan Member of Parliament Datuk Abdol Mulok Awang Damit who led a large retinue of community leaders, heads of department and local dignitaries to welcome the prime minister.

With a 60,000 population now, Labuan became a federal territory in 1984 and was declared an off-shore financial centre six years later to attract foreign banks to set up operations here.

Soon after arrival, Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president and chairman of the government Barisan Nasional, held a closed-door meeting with Umno leaders.

At a following luncheon with Umno and BN leaders as well senior government officers and leaders of non-governmental organisations, Dr Mahathir also launched a video compact disc on Labuan's tourism and a book "Layang-Layang: A Drop in the Ocean" by Nicolas Pilcher, Steve Oakley and Prof Ghazaly Ismail.

In the afternoon Dr Mahathir is scheduled to meet BN leaders and later with hoteliers and those involved in the hospitality industry here.

The president of the Labuan Chinese chamber of commerce Tan Sri Wong Chik Lim is also scheduled to call on the prime minister later today.

Tonight, the prime minister is scheduled to address thousands of Labuan residents at a meet-the-people rally at Labuan Square.

Dr Mahathir departs for Kota Kinabalu tomorrow to continue with his two-day visit to Sabah.

-- BERNAMA

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