

24 MAR 1999

MAHATHIR LEAVES FOR THE HAJ

KUALA LUMPUR, March 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad left here today for Mecca to perform the haj.

He was accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

This is Dr Mahathir's second pilgrimage to Mecca. He performed the haj for the first time 25 years ago.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Cabinet ministers and assistant ministers were among those at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang here to bid him farewell.

Also present were several menteri besar.

Dr Mahathir will join some two million Muslims including 22,000 from Malaysia in performing the haj this year.

He is scheduled to proceed to Mecca on arrival from Jeddah. The Saudi government has fixed Friday for the Wukuf in Arafah.

Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah are expected to return home on Wednesday.

-- BERNAMA

MNY/ARA RM