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PM to address UN assembly

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad leaves tonight to attend the 54th Session of the United Nations General Assembly and will be in New York September 26-29.

The Prime Minister will be accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Members of Parliament, and senior officials from the Foreign Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office, Wisma Putra said in a statement yesterday.

Dr Mahathir last attended a UN General Assembly in 1996 when Tan Sri Razali Ismail, then Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the UN, was appointed president of the 51st Session.

The current 54th UN General Assembly Session was officially opened on September 14 and its Regular Session will adjourn latest by the third week of December 1999.

It will be attended by heads of state and government as well as foreign ministers of the 188 member states.

Being one of six principal organs of the UN, the UN General Assembly deliberates on disarmament and international security; economic and financial; social, humanitarian and cultural; special political and decolonisation; UN administrative and budgetary; and legal issues.

The highlight of the Prime Minister's programme will be his address at the Plenary Session of the UN General Assembly on September 29.

He will also make courtesy calls on the president of the 54th UN General Assembly Session and the UN secretary general.

In addition, he will address the Asia Society corporate dinner, the inaugural session of the Malaysia-US Business Council and the US Council on Foreign Relations.

Dr Mahathir is also scheduled to meet leaders of the US tourism industry and the Malaysian community in New York.

Bernamea-Kyodo reports: Foreign ministers from Japan and South-East Asian nations agreed on Thursday to encourage the international community to help Indonesia maintain economic and political stability and to avoid linking such assistance to political upheavals in East Timor, a Japanese official said in New York.

The agreement came during a meeting over breakfast between Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura and his counterparts from Asean held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session, the official told reporters.

Komura pledged financial assistance to Asean nations and other developing nations planning to send troops to a UN-approved multinational force in charge of restoring peace and order in violence-hit East Timor, the official said.

Japan has said it will make "substantial" contributions to a UN trust fund to help nations which are willing to join the UN force but have economic difficulties to pay for the mission.

The official said Komura told his counterparts that Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi intends to attend a summit of Asean plus China, Japan and South Korea to be held on November 28 in Manila.

Komura noted that Obuchi intends to announce a new initiative during the summit to beef up Japan's commitments in helping other nations in Asia tackle economic and social challenges in the 21st century, the official said.

The initiative will be based on recommendations made by a mission of Japanese business and academic leaders who traveled recently on a fact-finding mission to Asia, the official said.

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