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Mahathir-Asem

MAHATHIR ARRIVES IN SEOUL TO ATTEND ASEM

By: E.Sivabalan

SEOUL, Oct 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here tonight to attend the third Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) set to kick-off tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir is accompanied by wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, who arrived here earlier today, was expected to brief Dr Mahathir on issues to be discussed at the summit.

Dr Mahathir is expected to call on South Korean President Kim Dae-jung tonight.

The two-day Asem will be attended by heads of state and government as well as top-level representatives from 10 Asian countries, 15 European nations and the European Commission (EC).

The Asian countries comprise seven Asean member states namely Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam as well as China, Japan and South Korea.

Three other Asean member states namely Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar are not members of Asem.

The European side comprises Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and the EC.

Tomorrow, just after the opening ceremony, the leaders will hold their first closed session to discuss "Promotion of Political Dialogue".

According to Malaysian Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad, the leaders would review, among others, regional security situation, the role of the United Nations and globalisation.

Later at a working lunch the leaders were expected to approve the Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework (AECF) 2000, a document setting the guidelines for the Asem process for the first decade of the new millennium, Kadir said.

At the second closed session they would discuss, among others, reinforcing their cooperation in all fields.

On Saturday, the leaders will hold their third and final closed session.

Apart from the AECF document, two other documents will also be adopted at the third Asem, the Chairman's Statement and the Seoul Declaration for Peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The former covers developments in the two regions, fostering political dialogue, reinforcing cooperation in the economic and financial fields and promoting cooperation in other areas, including social and cultural issues.

The declaration will confirm the support of Asem partners for the results of the Inter-Korean Summit and the implementation of the Joint Declaration.

Dr Mahathir was also scheduled to have bilateral talks with EC President Romano Prodi and Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker at the sidelines of the summit before returning home on Saturday.

Meanwhile, in separate programmes after the opening ceremony Dr Siti Hasmah and wives of the other Asian and European leaders will tour Choson Dynasty palaces at Biwon (Secret Garden) and Changdok in downtown Seoul for a taste of traditional Korean culture.

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