

12 FEB 2000

MAHATHIR-MEETINGS

MAHATHIR BEGINS HECTIC UNCTAD SCHEDULE

By: Mikhail Raj Abullah

BANGKOK, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is here to attend the 10th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), will have a one-day hectic schedule with meetings lined up with regional leaders and top United Nations and UNCTAD officials.

Before the opening of the conference by Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai later in the afternoon, Asean leaders and UN officials would gather for a roundtable discussion on political and security plus development issues.

Dr Mahathir would be the lead speaker for development issues during the talks, in which Laos and Cambodia would provide additional remarks on the Mekong Basin and Human Resource Development, respectively.

Asean Heads of government are also scheduled to meet Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi where issues such as the reform of the international financial architecture, globalisation and Asean-Japanese cooperation would be dwelved into.

Dr Mahathir would have discussions with United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan in the evening to be followed by an official call by Chuan on the Prime Minister.

The most important aspect of his presence at the UNCTAD meeting would be his presentation at the first plenary session scheduled to begin at 7.30 pm local time.

Dr Mahathir, who is the first speaker, is expected to call on UNCTAD to play a more definitive role in ensuring that developing economies too gain from the much-touted globalisation and liberalisation initiatives.

Others who would follow suit include Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid, Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and Obuchi.

Other leaders are also expected to take the opportunity to hold bilateral talks with Dr Mahathir on the sidelines of the UNCTAD meeting.

Established in 1964, UNCTAD is the principal organ of the United Nations General Assembly in the field of trade and development.

All UNCTAD events are being held at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre here.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here yesterday with Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, would leave for home at 9.30 pm tonight. -- BERNAMA

MR DVS