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Dr M on a two-day working visit to Dubai

Ashraf Abdullah in Dubai

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrives here today for a two-day working visit to strengthen bilateral relations with Dubai specifically, and the United Arab Emirates, generally.

Dr Mahathir's busy schedule begins at 12.30pm (4.30pm Malaysian time) when he delivers his keynote address entitled "Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century: The Role of Muslim Nations" at the Emirates International Forum, which comprises prominent corporate and business leaders.

Dr Mahathir is the only guest to speak at the forum, which will be followed by a question-and-answer session.

Later in the evening, the Prime Minister will visit the Dubai Internet City situated inside the Dubai Technology, Electronic Commerce and Media Authority Free Zone.

The DIC aims to create a clustered economy that comprises software developers, multimedia businesses, telecommunication companies, remote service providers, logistic companies, venture capitalists and educators in a single area. It is also to be a catalyst of these companies promoting their business in the region.

The DIC offers ready-to-operate, modern and fully serviced office spaces that cater to the specific needs of the New Economy companies.

The DIC allows 100 per cent foreign ownership of companies. The laws related to partnerships with local sponsors have been relaxed. Companies can also take up land on a renewable lease of up to 50 years and build their own offices.

The Dubai Government claims that the DIC is second to none. Sun Microsystems provided the server platforms, iPlanet has provided the software, Lucent the cabling and Cisco the active components. Siemens is the integrator.

It is the biggest IT built in the Middle East and has the largest generation Internet protocol telephone system in the world.

Dr Mahathir will also witness the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the DIC and the Multimedia Development Corporation as well as an agreement between AirportXChange Sdn Bhd with Dubai International Airport and DIC.

The Prime Minister will meet Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources, Obein Saif Al-Nassiri, before having dinner with about 200 Malaysians residing in Dubai.