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Mahathir-Visit

DR MAHATHIR LEAVES FOR TOKYO FOR FOUR-DAY VISIT

SUBANG, June 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad left for Tokyo tonight for a four-day visit during which he is expected to hold talks with his Japanese counterpart Junichiro Koizumi.

He is expected to deliver a keynote address at the 7th Nikkei International Conference: The Future of Asia -- "Beyond Globalism" in Tokyo on Friday.

The executive jet carrying the prime minister and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali left the Royal Malaysian Air Force station here at 11pm.

Among those at the RMAF station to send off the prime minister was his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Dr Mahathir is also scheduled to speak on globalisation at the U Thant Distinguished Lecture Series at the United Nations University tomorrow, according to his tentative programme issued by the Foreign Ministry here.

The prime minister is also scheduled to visit the NTT Musashino R&D Centre.

He will also meet Malaysian students in Tokyo for a dialogue session.

Dr Mahathir last visited Japan in June last year during which he attended the 6th Nikkei International Conference organised by the media group Nihon Keizei Shimbun.

Japan is now the largest investor in the manufacturing sector in Malaysia and the second largest trading partner accounting for 16.7 per cent of Malaysia's global trade of US\$180.4 billion (RM685.52 billion).

Malaysia's total trade with Japan in 2000 saw an increase of 28.1 per cent over that in 1999.

Exports to Japan accounted for 13.1 per cent of Malaysia's total exports while Japan was the leading source of Malaysia's imports accounting for 21.1 per cent of total imports in 2000.

Among Asean countries, Malaysia is the second largest exporter to Japan after Indonesia, according to the International Trade and Industry Ministry.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Ambassador to Japan Datuk Marzuki Mohamed Noor told Bernama in Tokyo that Dr Mahathir would be conferred an honorary doctorate by the Meiji University tomorrow.

This would be the first time a Japanese university was conferring an honorary doctorate on Dr Mahathir, he said.

Marzuki said the prime minister would be the 18th recipient of the honour and the fifth foreigner to be conferred the honorary doctorate by the university which was established in 1881.

The prime minister's speech at the United Nations University will be telecast live on the Internet through www.unu.edu.

-- BERNAMA

JM YBY