

11 MAY 2001

Castro-Arrival

FIDEL CASTRO ARRIVES FOR THREE-DAY VISIT TO MALAYSIA

SEPANG, May 11 (Bernama) -- Cuban President Fidel Castro arrived here early today for his first visit to Malaysia at the invitation of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah.

He was met on arrival at the KL International Airport by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

The aircraft, which originated from Tehran carrying the 74-year old Cuban leader and his entourage touched down at about 12.30am. Prior to Malaysia, Castro visited Algeria and Iran.

His three-day visit to this country came a year after the first South Summit of the Group of 77 (G77) in Havana which was attended by more than 60 leaders including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The official welcoming ceremony for Castro will be held at Parliament Square today and will be attended by Sultan Salahuddin and Dr Mahathir.

Cuba's leader since 1959, Castro is scheduled to hold talks with Dr Mahathir at the Prime Minister's Department in Putrajaya before witnessing the signing of a bilateral cooperation agreement.

The president is slated to hold a public lecture on globalisation at a function organised by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations.

He will also have an audience with Sultan Salahuddin at the Istana Negara before being hosted by the king to a state banquet.

A few days ago, Dr Mahathir said he and Castro would discuss bilateral cooperation as well as economic and international issues during the latter's visit.

The prime minister's trip to Cuba last year was his second, the first in 1997.

Cuba opened its resident embassy in Kuala Lumpur in 1998 while Malaysia set up its permanent mission in Havana last March.

-- BERNAMA

AT MAM ABG