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Mahathir-Japan

MAHATHIR VISITING JAPAN THURSDAY

By: D.Arul Rajoo

OSAKA, Jan 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to arrive here on Thursday for a four-day working visit during which he will address a symposium on Asian understanding and explore advancements in Japanese technology.

Malaysia's ambassador to Japan Datuk Marzuki Mohammad Noor said here today that Dr Mahathir's tight schedule include delivering a keynote address at the symposium on "Promoting Mutual Understanding for Asian Countries, Japan especially Kansai" at the Osaka International Centre.

"This symposium is being organised by Mainichi Shimbun to get views and ideas basically on Asia, challenges and issues facing Asia especially in the new millennium," he said.

Dr Mahathir will then join Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan, South Korean ambassador to Japan Choi Sang Yong, former director-general of the Japanese Economic Planning Agency Taichi Sakaiya and NTT West Japan President Kazuo Asada for a panel discussion.

The prime minister is also expected to receive the chairman of Kansai Economic Federation (Kankeiren), Yoshihisa Akiyama who is also Kansai Electric Power Co. Inc president.

Kankeiren is a private non-profit organisation with approximately 860 major corporations and organisations as its members.

Later in the evening, Dr Mahathir will attend a reception to mark the publication of a book based on his articles in the Mainichi Shimbun Japanese newspaper.

The book is a compilation of a 17-series of monthly columns of commentary and opinion from February 1999 to June last year.

The book was launched in Japan last month, said Marzuki.

On the second day, Dr Mahathir is scheduled to visit the Sharp Liquid Plant in Tenri City, Nara Prefecture for a first hand look at Sharp's development of liquid crystal display (LCD).

"LCD is very important now and widely used. The prime minister will see how this is being done, furthermore Sharp is a leader in this field," the ambassador said.

Next Dr Mahathir will visit the Osaka Electro-Communication University, a 50-year old institution which specialises in the Information Technology, for a tour of its Department of Media-Information Culture established last year.

The university set up the department on the belief that computer usage and understanding of media-delivered information are basic to living a responsible and productive life in the 21st century.

The prime minister will hold a dialogue with Malaysian students studying in the Kansai region at the Rihga Royal Hotel where he would be staying during his visit.

On his third day in the city, which is bidding to host the 2008 Olympic Games, Dr Mahathir will participate in a Fuji Television Network recording of a forum on "views and ideas on the 21st Century-Future of Asia and Japan's Choice".

Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara is one of the panellists.

The prime minister leaves for home on Sunday.

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