

18 AUG 2001

Mahathir-Wrap

MAHATHIR ENDS VISIT TO YEMEN

By: Abdul Muin Abdul Majid

SANA'A, Aug 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wrapped up his four-day visit to Yemen today by visiting the historic Old City of Sana'a accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

The Prime Minister toured the maze-like alleyways full of colourful shops selling a wide variety of goods ranging from the traditional Yemeni dagger worn proudly by Yemeni boys and men to door and window frames beside a wide array of spices and material for the ladies.

Yemenis gathered at the gate of the Old City to catch a glimpse of Dr Mahathir gave him a round of applause as he began the short tour.

At one point, out of nowhere, a shopowner presented a replica of one of Yemen's famous historical sites to Dr Siti Hasmah, much to her delight.

The couple also visited the National Art Centre and Manuscript Library located within the area.

The Old City maintains various gardens, mosques, open yards and contains ancient houses built of dark basalt stone which are intricately decorated.

Unesco has enlisted the place as a world heritage and declared it a preserved town.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived in Sana'a on Wednesday evening, had a tight programme in Yemen which, apart from Sana'a, took him to Aden and Seiyun in Hadhramout province.

On the second day of the visit, he held four-eyed talks with his Yemeni counterpart Abdul Kader Ba Jammal before proceeding with the bilateral delegation meeting.

The two governments signed two memoranda of understanding, one relating to the setting up of the Malaysia-Yemen Joint Commission, and the other was on cooperation and training for civil servants.

In addition, he called on Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Salleh.

Dr Mahathir also attended a meeting and dialogue session with members of the Yemeni Shoura Council which is an advisory body to the government comprising ulamas, intellectuals and members of the business community.

In Aden, he visited the Aden port and met with members of the Federation of Yemeni Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Yesterday, he flew to the town of Seiyun and addressed a gathering of Malaysian students and local ulamas at Ta'arim.

Dr Mahathir had to travel by helicopter to Ta'arim because a flash flood had blocked a portion of the road leading to the town which resulted in the convoy ferrying him and the Malaysian delegation having to head back to the airport.

Today, after touring the Old City of Sana'a, Dr Mahathir held a media conference before leaving for the airport for his flight to Uganda to attend a dialogue of cooperation among African countries.

-- BERNAMA

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