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President Arroyo given state welcome

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo of the Philippines arrived here today for a three-day state visit aimed at enhancing ties between Manila and Kuala Lumpur.

Her trip is her first abroad since she assumed the presidency of the republic of 74 million people in January.

She was received at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

Arroyo, who is accompanied by her husband Jose Miguel Arroyo, is leading a 90-member delegation of senior government officials and businessmen.

Her visit is the first by a Philippine head of state since Fidel Ramos's visit in 1993.

The President was accorded a state welcome by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Siti Aishah at Parliament Square. Also present were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Cabinet members, senior government officials and members of the diplomatic corps.

Arroyo inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by four officers and 110 men of the First Royal Malay Regiment under the command of Mejar Mohd Ariffin Sulaiman.

She then went on a state drive with the King. Dr Mahathir and his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali later called on Arroyo.

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