

11 MAY 2001
Castro-Arrival
STATE WELCOME FOR FIDEL CASTRO

KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 (Bernama) -- Cuban President Fidel Castro, who arrived here early today for a three-day visit, was given a ceremonial welcome at Parliament Square.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah received him on arrival there.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Cabinet ministers were present.

Castro inspected a guard of honour mounted by four officers and 104 men of the 1st Battalion Royal Malay Regiment commanded by Maj Ariffin Simon as a 21-gun salute was fired.

He was then introduced to a line of cabinet ministers and members of the diplomatic corps.

This is Castro's first visit to Malaysia at the invitation of the King.

Earlier, upon arrival at the KL International Airport in Sepang at about 12.30 am, he was received by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

Prior to Malaysia, Castro visited Algeria and Iran.

His visit 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 Dr Mahathir who first visited Cuba in 1997.

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.

Later today he is also slated to deliver a public lecture on globalisation and have an audience with Sultan Salahuddin at Istana Negara before adjourning to a state banquet.

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

-- BERNAMA
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