

Prime Minister has a Nst 2 1 MAR 2002 hectic schedule in Poland

From Syed Nadzri in Warsaw

news@nstp.com.my

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's whirlwind tour of the north eastern part of Europe enters its last, but hardly the least important, leg today when he arrives for a three-day official visit to Poland.

The Prime Minister is set to send officials in his delegation scurrying to keep pace because, like during his stops in Russia and Germany earlier in the week, a hectic programme awaits.

By comparison, Poland may not measure up in size to Russia and Germany or be as familiar with Malaysians. After all, there are only five Malaysians among the 40 million population of Poland, a figure confirmed by Malaysia's ambassador to Poland, Datuk Ng Bak Hai.

But the fact is that this is by all accounts an official visit, the first by a Malaysian head of government to the former Eastern Bloc country.

And by doing so, Dr Mahathir, who will be accompanied by a 60-strong delegation of Government officials and businessmen, will open the door of opportunity for

both sides to explore the vast potential ahead.

At the last count, trade between the two countries totalled about RM1 billion but the potential can never be underestimated considering that Poland is an emerging market after the fall of Communism a decade ago.

Three senior Ministers are in the delegation — Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz — together with Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud.

Just after he arrives from Berlin this morning, an official welcome will be accorded to Dr Mahathir at the office of Polish Prime Minister Leszek Miller followed by a delegation meeting.

Dr Mahathir will also call on Polish president Aleksander Kwasniewski.

Dr Mahathir will next speak at a business luncheon followed by a visit to an armoured brigade headquarters on the outskirts of Warsaw to see a demonstration of Polish-made T-91 battle tanks Malaysia is interested in buying.