

15 APR 2002

Mahathir-Departure

PRIME MINISTER LEAVES FOR MOROCCO, LIBYA AND BAHRAIN

SEPANG, April 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, leading a 160-member delegation of several cabinet ministers, government officials and corporate leaders, left here today for a week-long working visit to Morocco, Libya and Bahrain

The prime minister, whose itinerary is packed with several bilateral meetings, dialogues and luncheon talks, will be in Morocco from today until Thursday when he will proceed to Libya where his visit ends on Saturday.

Dr Mahathir, who is accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, winds up the three-nation visit with a working visit to Bahrain on Saturday and Sunday.

Cabinet ministers in the entourage are Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Nazri Abdul Aziz and Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil.

Arab-Malaysian Bank Bhd chairman Tan Sri Azman Hashim heads the 64-member business delegation.

The trip is regarded as important by the government as it is believed that the visit will further strengthen bilateral relations and economic cooperation between Malaysia and the three nations.

The thrust of Dr Mahathir's visit is expected to be on ways to enhance trade and economic ties, where at present there are vast rooms for improvement between Malaysia and the three Islamic countries.

Other important areas of discussions during Dr Mahathir's meetings with government heads and leaders will centre on terrorism and the current Israel-Palestine conflict.

The highlight of his visit is expected to be his meetings on Thursday with Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

Dr Mahathir will be meeting Gaddafi on Libyan soil for the first time. The two leaders met on the sidelines during the Organisation of Islamic Conference's Summits in the past.

While in Morocco, Dr Mahathir will call on King Mohammed VI who was installed as Head of State two years ago after his father's death.

He will also meet his Moroccan counterpart, Abderrahmane Yousouffi, and will have an informal meeting with Malaysian students there.

In Bahrain, the prime minister will perform a ground-breaking ceremony for the Malaysian Trade and Exhibition Centre in Manama.

It will be Malaysia's centre in West Asia after Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Dr Mahathir will also meet his Bahraini counterpart, Shaikh Khalifa Salman Al-Khalifa.

-- BERNAMA

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