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Busy schedule for PM in Germany

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to arrive in this Bavarian capital today to begin a three-day official visit to Germany, aimed at promoting bilateral trade and investment between both countries.

Various programmes have been arranged for Dr Mahathir who is no stranger to having such a tight schedule for his overseas trips.

Soon after arriving, the Prime Minister will open the Malaysia-German Business Forum at the Hilton Munchen Park, delivering a keynote address entitled Realising a Vision: The Malaysian Way.

The event, to be attended by 200 participants who are mostly German captains of industry and leaders of the business community, is jointly hosted by the Multimedia Development Corporation and Asian Strategic Leadership Institute in co-operation with the Munich Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The list of participating companies is impressive, covering almost all types of businesses.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Energy, Telecommunication and Multimedia Minister Datuk Amar Leo Moggie will also speak.

Participants will also be shown a video presentation on what the Multimedia Development Corporation has to offer to German companies.

Total trade last year between both countries stood at 5.9 billion euros (RM19.78 billion), with Malaysia registering a surplus in export of 919 million euros. The figure is expected to increase to 6.5 billion euros this year, with Malaysia's exporting products worth some 3.8 billion euros to Germany.

However, on German capital investment in Malaysia, a drop has been forecast for this year from 500 million euros last year to only 146 million euros this year.

From Hilton Hotel, Dr Mahathir will depart for the State Ministry of Economic Affairs, Transport and Technology for a briefing on biotech development by Professor Dr Horst Domdev, chairman of the board of BioMAG.

Munich is the second largest centre for bio-tech industry in Europe after the United Kingdom.

In the German capital, Dr Mahathir will meet leaders from the Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie or the Confederation of German Industries and Ostasiatischer Verein (OAV) or the German-Asia Pacific Business Association.

One of the highlights of the Prime Minister's visit is the official opening of the Malaysian embassy at Klingelhoferstrasse 6, Berlin.

On Wednesday, Dr Mahathir is scheduled to call on German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, vice-chancellor and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and president of the German Bundestag Wolfgang Thierse.

The Prime Minister and wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali will also be taken on a city tour of Berlin to enable them to see the physical development of the city since the reunification in 1989.

Among the locations are the Potsdamer Platz, which was Europe's busiest square in the 1920s but was completely destroyed in the war and left undeveloped until 1991; the East Side Gallery, a 1.3km stretch of the Berlin Wall which has been preserved as a memorial; and Check Point Charlie, a former border crossing point.

Dr Mahathir will also visit Adlershof, Berlin's city of science, technology and media.

It is a new district to be redeveloped until 2010 with university and research institutions, media companies, innovative technology companies and new residential quarters for 10,000 inhabitants.

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