

04 OCT 2002

Mahathir-Asean

DR MAHATHIR TO ADDRESS INDO-ASEAN BUSINESS SUMMIT

By: Mahesh Prasad

NEW DELHI, Oct 4 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad will address the two-day Indo-Asean Business Summit which starts here on Oct 17.

After a day-long meet in Delhi, the summit, which is expected to provide an opportunity for top executives from India and the Asean countries to interface and strategise across a range of business sectors, will shift to Hyderabad.

The summit is organised by the ministries of External Affairs and Commerce and Industry along with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Senior officials of the External Affairs Ministry are reported to have said that the summit is being split between New Delhi and Hyderabad because of the special interest shown by the Chief Minister of southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, Chandrababu Naidu, to woo investors from the Asean region to his state.

It is significant that Dr Mahathir, who arrives in India on Oct 16, will begin his three-day visit to the country from Hyderabad.

In Hyderabad, he will meet Naidu and visit the High Tech City. His main interest in the Andhra capital is in information technology.

Dr Mahathir will arrive in Delhi around noon on Oct 17. Besides his address to the Indo-Asean Business Summit, he is expected to call on the president, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Rajiv Sikri, Additional Secretary to the Ministry of External Affairs, is quoted to have said that "the forthcoming summit would be an important step in the evolution of Indo-Asean relationship."

The business sessions at the summit in Delhi will be on infrastructure, including roads, telecommunications, airports and railways, financial services and insurance, tourism, promoting trade and investment flows and oil and gas.

The sessions in the Andhra capital will be on knowledge economy, information technology, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, human resource development and entertainment.

India has bilateral trade of US\$10 billion with countries in the Asean region. While India's exports to this trading bloc are valued at US\$3.6 billion, the imports account for US\$6.4 billion.

Around 150 business leaders from Asean and nearly 200 from India are expected to take part in the summit.

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