

04 JUN 2002

Mahathir-Visit

DR MAHATHIR IN VATICAN CITY, SWITZERLAND AND LUXEMBOURG ON JUNE 7-13

KUALA LUMPUR, June 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad leaves tomorrow for a working visit to Rome from June 6 to 8 before his official visit to Switzerland and Luxembourg from June 9 to 11 and June 11 to 13 respectively.

According to a Wisma Putra statement, Dr Mahathir will be accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, several Cabinet ministers, senior government officials and a business delegation.

In the Vatican City, Dr Mahathir will be meeting Pope John Paul II and other members of the government of the Holy See.

In their first ever meeting, the Prime Minister and the Pope are expected to discuss issues of mutual concern such as terrorism, the Palestine-Israel conflict and the inter-cultural dialogue between Islam and Christianity.

Wisma Putra said that since Malaysia and the Holy See have not established formal diplomatic ties with one another, this initial meeting will mark the beginning of closer relations between Kuala Lumpur and the Vatican.

It is envisaged that Dr Mahathir's visit will provide the impetus to foster bilateral relations in the future as well as contribute to the better understanding of Islam and Christianity and future collaboration in resolving inter-religious conflicts.

While in Rome, the Prime Minister, also accompanied by the chairman of the National Fatwa Council and an independent religious preacher, Uthman Mohamadi, will visit the Islamic Cultural Centre, also known as Rome Mosque, where he will perform Friday prayers.

During his official visit to Switzerland, Dr Mahathir will be in Berne where he is scheduled to have a restricted meeting with President of the Swiss Federation Kaspar Villiger.

This will be followed by a bilateral delegation meeting where both leaders are expected to exchange views on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest.

The Prime Minister is also scheduled to visit the Sauber Petronas facility in Hinwill.

In Zurich, Dr Mahathir will meet selected financiers and also attend a dinner hosted by Lukas Muhlemann, chief executive officer of Credit Suisse.

Wisma Putra said that the Prime Minister has also accepted an invitation to address the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILO) on June 11 in Geneva after which he will leave for Luxembourg for a three-day official visit, the first by a Malaysian Prime Minister.

He is scheduled to have bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker and President of the Chamber of Deputies Jean Spautz.

Wisma Putra said that the meeting with his Luxembourg counterpart will enable Dr Mahathir to further enhance closer political, economic and trade relations between the two countries.

The two leaders are also expected to discuss regional and contemporary international issues which are of mutual concern such as globalisation, terrorism and the West Asian peace process.

Dr Mahathir's visit will also provide the opportunity to spur Malaysia-Luxembourg bilateral economic relations to greater heights, more so as Luxembourg is an established financial centre in Europe, hosting more

than 200 banks and some 1,500 investment funds.

The Prime Minister will also see first hand the International Electronics and Engineering (IEE) plant which has emerged as a global leader in sensing technologies especially in the area of passive safety in automotive applications.

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