

18 AUG 2002

Mahathir-Departure

DR MAHATHIR LEAVES FOR MYANMAR FOR TWO-DAY VISIT

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 18 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, left today for a two-day visit to Myanmar, his second to that Asean country in 19 months and the fourth since 1988.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, left on a special aircraft from the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) base in Subang near here at 3.45pm.

They were seen off by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and several Cabinet ministers.

The Prime Minister is reciprocating the visit made in September last year by Myanmar leader Senior General Than Shwe who is Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council.

Dr Mahathir is leading a 300-member delegation which includes Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Leo Moggie.

The previous trip by Dr Mahathir was in January last year during which the door to business opportunities was officially opened to Malaysian companies, especially in the field of processing raw materials which are abundant in Myanmar.

The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1958 and Myanmar became an Asean member in 1997.

The Prime Minister is scheduled to call on Than Shwe at Parliament House soon after his arrival and later will attend a dinner hosted by the Senior General at the same venue.

Dr Mahathir will return home tomorrow evening.

-- BERNAMA

RZS AKT AAM