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MAHATHIR-ASEM  
MAHATHIR LEAVES FOR ASEM SUMMIT ON FRIDAY NIGHT

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will leave for Europe tomorrow night ahead of the fourth Asia-Europe Meeting, a summit of Asian and European leaders, which begins in Copenhagen on Monday.

Prior to the summit, there will be meetings of senior officials and ministers who are expected to discuss a wide range of issues, including identifying the root causes of terrorism and finding solutions to tackle the problem.

According to a programme issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here today, Dr Mahathir, who will arrive in the Danish capital at midday on Sunday, will proceed to attend an Asian Leaders' Meeting in preparation for their meeting with their European counterparts the following day.

ASEM comprises the 10 Asian countries of China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei and the 15 member states of the European Union and the European Commission.

It was established with the first summit in Bangkok in 1996, followed by biennial summits in London in 1998 and South Korea in 2000.

Lasse Reimann, Denmark's ambassador to Malaysia, told Bernama recently that Denmark, which holds the European Union (EU) presidency from July 1 to Dec 31 this year, is looking forward to Dr Mahathir's arrival for the summit since he is a firm believer of finding the root causes of terrorism from very early on in the aftermath of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

He had said that Denmark placed great importance in the ASEM Summit as it was a forum for European and Asian cooperation to gather greater substance, more so since cooperation between the two continents was not as intense as Denmark would like it to be.

The summit proper on Monday will start with an informal political dialogue on the international situation in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and the new security issues arising out of the incident.

There will also be further dialogues on culture and civilisations as well as on economic co-operation, with emphasis on regional economic and financial priorities in the context of the global economic scenario.

Queen Margrethe II of Denmark will host all ASEM leaders to an official dinner on Monday night.

The second and last day will see the leaders converging again to discuss social, culture and education issues, with focus on human resource development, development and educational exchange, fostering mutual understanding, reducing poverty and increasing employability.

Dr Mahathir is also expected to have an informal lunch with Malaysian citizens and businessmen in Denmark on Tuesday before leaving Copenhagen.

Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar will attend the ministerial portion of ASEM while the Ministry of International Trade and Industry is represented by its Secretary-General, Datuk Abdul Razak Ramli.

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