

20 MAY 2002

Mahathir-Japan

MAHATHIR ARRIVES IN JAPAN FOR WORKING VISIT

By: Siti Hawa Othman

TOKYO, May 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here today for a three-day working visit to Japan.

His executive jet landed at Narita Airport at 4.30pm local time where he was met by the Malaysian ambassador to Japan, Datuk Mohamed Marzuki Mohamed Noor, and other embassy officials.

Dr Mahathir and his entourage then left for central Tokyo by rail aboard the JR Narita Express 34 and was later driven from the Tokyo Station to the Imperial Hotel where he will be staying until Wednesday.

Tonight, he will attend a private dinner hosted by former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.

Briefing Malaysian journalists covering the Prime Minister's visit here earlier, Marzuki said the dinner was a get-together with Nakasone who played a crucial role in supporting Malaysia's Look East Policy.

Nakasone was Japan's Prime Minister back then when Malaysia introduced the policy about 20 years ago.

Dr Mahathir has a tight schedule Tuesday, which includes a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

He will also attend the 8th Nikkei International Conference the same day.

Of importance would be a breakfast meeting with members of the Japan-Malaysia Parliamentarians' Friendship League, Marzuki said.

Comprising 25 parliamentarians, including two full ministers and two senior vice-ministers, members of the league were considered friends of Malaysia for their effectiveness in explaining Malaysia's policies to the Diet (Japanese Parliament), he said.

Marzuki said the meeting would present a good opportunity for exchanging ideas besides enabling Dr Mahathir to brief the members on the progress made by Malaysia.

At midday tomorrow, Dr Mahathir will deliver a keynote speech on "China -- A Challenge or an Opportunity for Asean" at the Nikkei International Conference.

The conference, which will focus on China, has chosen the theme, "The Future of Asia -- Emerging China and the Changing Regional Framework".

Later, Dr Mahathir will meet Dr Kisho Kurokawa, the architect of the KL International Airport in Sepang, where the discussions are expected to revolve around the concept of Malaysia's "bio-village." The bio-village has been proposed as a dedicated place to cluster bio-technology-related industries and services within the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

Dr Mahathir will then call on Koizumi at Sori Kantei, the Japanese prime minister's office, where both leaders are expected to touch on issues of common interest, bilateral trade as well as the setting up of a "Technical University" in Malaysia.

In the afternoon, he will be interviewed exclusively by Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Inc (Nikkei) as well as attend a TV interview with N.H.K. for its prime time News 10.

His schedule later in the day includes a meeting with Masajuro Shiokawa, who is Minister of Finance and chairman of the Japan-Malaysia Association, a special cocktail reception for Asian political leaders with Koizumi and the Nikkei Conference dinner.

On Wednesday, Dr Mahathir will leave for Nagasaki for a ship-naming ceremony for Puteri Intan Satu, a vessel owned by Malaysia International

Shipping Corporation Bhd, at the Koyagi Plant of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd's Nagasaki Shipyard & Machinery Works.

Dr Mahathir is expected to leave for Seoul, South Korea, at 4pm local time on Wednesday.

-- BERNAMA

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