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Preparations for NAM on schedule, says Dr Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Preparations for the 13th Non-Aligned Movement Summit at the Putra World Trade Centre are going on as scheduled, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad although the "main problem would be caused by heavy traffic in the city".

Dr Mahathir, speaking to reporters after being briefed on preparations for the six-day summit beginning on Feb 20, said the programmes were in order.

"However, there is the problem of traffic congestion.

"We will be receiving more than 100 delegations and they all cannot arrive at the same time.

"Their arrivals will have to be staggered.

"Some of the roads will have to be opened for them and this will cause some inconvenience to the public."

Dr Mahathir appealed to the public to leave for work earlier than usual as the summit's organisers would close roads around the city leading to the PWTC from 8am to 10am.

"We have agreed to delay the opening ceremony to 10am with the hope that the public who are going to their offices will leave their homes earlier. This will enable us to close certain roads for a short period. The police will also look for alternative routes," he said.

He also asked the public to bear with the traffic congestion which might occur between now and February due to the trial runs by the authorities to prepare for the actual summit.

He added that in other countries, the public would not be allowed into the city for three to four days.

"I am satisfied with the preparations. We have to give a good image to the visiting delegates. (We have to show) that we can co-operate to make such a large summit successful."

The NAM Summit is scheduled for Feb 20-25 and is expected to be attended by heads of Government or State from at least 50 countries.

The NAM has 114 members and the last summit was held in Durban.

During his two and a half hour visit to PWTC, Dr Mahathir visited the Tun Razak Hall and which is expected to be the waiting room for the summit.

He also viewed preparations that are being done in the Merdeka Hall which will be the main venue of the summit.

On Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang's statement that Umno was behind the demonstration by some 100 farmers over the pay rise for the Menteri Besar and State Executive Councilors, Dr Mahathir said Umno could also accuse Pas of the very same thing.

"They can accuse us and we can accuse them.

"In past demonstrations it was Pas who spurred people to demonstrate.

"The demonstrations were carried out by people who did not want to demonstrate.

"Such demonstrations are actually being instigated by Pas."