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Mahathir-arrives

DR MAHATHIR ARRIVES IN WASHINGTON FOR THREE-DAY VISIT

By: E.Sivabalan and Salmy Hashim

WASHINGTON, May 14 (Bernama) - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here Monday to begin his three-day visit to the United States at the invitation of President George W.Bush.

This is Dr Mahathir's first visit to the White House since 1994, when he met Bush's predecessor Bill Clinton.

The special aircraft carrying the prime minister landed at the Andrew's Air Force base here at about 2pm local time (2am Malaysian time).

The motorcade made its way to the US President's guesthouse called Blair House at 1651 Pennsylvania Avenue where Dr Mahathir will be staying.

The prime minister's nine-member delegation arrived here earlier. They include Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman.

On Monday night, Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, was scheduled to attend a dinner hosted by the US-Malaysia Exchange Association, an organisation made up of American and Malaysian opinion leaders.

After the dinner, he was scheduled to have coffee with the Congressional Club made up of staffers.

A hectic schedule awaits Dr Mahathir on Tuesday where he will hold talks with Bush at the White House and several senior members of his administration at the White House and Blair House.

His first meeting is with Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neil followed by a meeting with US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick.

After his meeting with acting Secretary of State Richard Armitage, Dr Mahathir was expected to witness the signing of the Joint Declaration on Cooperation in Counter Terrorism by Syed Hamid and Armitage.

The prime minister will have a meeting with the Washington Post and later attend a luncheon hosted by Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dennis Hastert at Capitol Hill and then have coffee with members of Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Prior to the luncheon, Dr Mahathir will launch the Malaysian Trade, Security and Economic Cooperation Caucus.

The scheduled 35-minute meeting with Bush will be at 4.05pm local time (4.05am Malaysian time) at the Oval Office. This will be followed by a meeting with the National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and vice president Dick Cheney.

On Tuesday night, the prime minister will attend a dinner hosted by the US-Asean Business Council followed by a brief meeting with the chairman, president and CEO of FedEx.

The prime minister will conclude his programme for the day with a meeting with the Malaysian media.

On Wednesday, his programme include meetings with Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan and congressman Tom DeLay.

He is also scheduled to open the new chancery building of the Malaysian embassy at 3516, International Court and meet with top officials of the Washington Times. There will also be an interview with CNN International.

Before ending his visit to the US, the prime minister will meet Malaysian students at the Malaysian embassy.

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