

18 OCT 2003

Mahathir-Visit

DR MAHATHIR TO ADDRESS TIMOR LESTE'S PARLIAMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to address Timor Leste's parliament during his three-day visit to the republic beginning Wednesday, according to Wisma Putra.

It said in a statement here today that Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, is also scheduled to deliver his keynote address at a business dialogue with Timor Leste's business community and perform the naming of a street, "Avenida da Malaysia" which means "Avenue of Malaysia", in Dili.

Wisma Putra said that Dr Mahathir's visit, "the first official visit made by a foreign head of government to the country since its independence in May last year," is to reciprocate Timor Leste's Prime Minister Mari Amude Alkatiri's visit to Malaysia last August.

Dr Mahathir's visit is expected to reinforce Malaysia's commitment to cultivate friendly and cooperative relations with Timor Leste in its quest to achieve economic and social development, as well as, political stability.

The Prime Minister and his counterpart are expected to explore opportunities for expansion of bilateral trade, as well as bilateral investment in Timor Leste, it said.

His entourage, among others, will comprise six cabinet ministers including Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and 30 businessmen.

During the visit, Dr Mahathir is expected to call on Timor Leste's President Xanana Gusmao and meet the Malaysian community there.

Last year, Malaysia was the fifth biggest investor in Tomor Leste, with 77 Malaysian investors venturing into the service industry and shipping in the newly-independent nation.

Prior to the visit to Timor Leste, Dr Mahathir will make a two-day visit to Yogyakarta from Tuesday to receive the Distinguished Fellow Award of the Asean Federation of Engineering Organisation (Afeo) at a ceremony in conjunction with the organisation's 21st conference.

"The award is given to the Prime Minister for his immense contribution to infrastructure development in Malaysia," Wisma Putra said.

Dr Mahathir will also be making a two-day visit to Papua New Guinea after his visit to Timor Leste, from Friday.

His visit, on the invitation of his counterpart, Sir Michael Thomas Somare, is his third to Papua New Guinea. Dr Mahathir's first visit was in 1982, and the second was two years later.

During the visit, Dr Mahathir is expected to exchange views with his counterpart on issues of mutual interest including exploring and indentifying of new areas of cooperation such as trade and investment.

He will also call on Papua New Guinea Governor, Gen Sir Silas Atopare besides addressing the country's business community and meeting the Malaysian community there.

-- BERNAMA

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