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Mahathir-Earthquake

DR MAHATHIR TOURS EARTHQUAKE SITE IN BOUMERDES

By: Mokhtar Hussain

ALGIERS, Aug 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is on a three-day visit to Algeria, Tuesday visited the site of last May's earthquake in the northern province of Algeria which killed more than 2,000 people and made 33,000 more homeless.

Dr Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali were taken on a tour of Boumerdes, some 50km east of here, to witness the aftermath of the 6.8 magnitude earthquake.

Upon arriving in Boumerdes city which is the hardest hit zone, they were briefed by senior Algerian officials on the extensive damage on the buildings and public facilities in the area as well as efforts by the authorities to help the victims.

The Algerian government was reported to have allocated some US\$1.8 billion for construction of new houses in five provinces affected by the earthquake.

According to reports, the earthquake struck in the evening when most residents were watching a European soccer final on television when their ceilings and walls began to shake and crumble.

After spending about an hour observing the structural damage and makeshift tent camps for the homeless, Dr Mahathir rushed back to the capital to receive the president of the Council of Nations, Abdelkader Bensalah, before having a private lunch with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

The Prime Minister also held discussion with Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia before attending a Malaysia-Syria Business Dialogue at a popular resort hotel here.

Dr Mahathir will leave for Swaziland at about 7.45pm local time Tuesday (2.45am MST Wednesday).

-- BERNAMA

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