

13 AUG 2003

MAHATHIR-ARRIVAL

DR MAHATHIR ARRIVES IN SWAZILAND FOR DIALOGUE

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

MANZINI, (Swaziland), Aug 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here early Wednesday morning to attend the four-day Global 2003 Smart Partnership Dialogue hosted by the tiny kingdom of Swaziland.

He was met on arrival at the Matsapha International Airport by Malaysian High Commissioner to South Africa Datuk Zainal Azman Zainal Abidin, Swaziland's Prime Minister Dr Barnabas Sibusiso and Swaziland's Minister of Economic Planning & Development, Prince Quduza.

Dr Mahathir, who flew in from Algiers, Algeria in a private jet, was accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

The couple were greeted with a traditional cultural dance performed by over 100 warrior-like dancers in colourful attire.

When asked to comment on the significance of the dialogue in Swaziland, Dr Mahathir said: "Many heads of state are here, like from the West Indies, Thailand and China.

"This shows that the dialogue has attracted a lot of interest and we believe that with exchange of information, we will be able to develop our own countries."

Asked on whether Malaysia would continue to host the Langkawi International Dialogue after he steps down as Prime Minister in November, he told reporters:

"I think so, it should go on, it's not (held) because of me...it's (because of) Malaysia."

The Prime Minister, who is staying at the Guest House Village, just outside Ezulwini where the dialogue would be held, has a tight schedule throughout his four days here.

Later today, he will meet the dialogue's host and patron King Mswati III of Swaziland and several Heads of Government in what has been described as a Fellows Welcome Session.

In the evening, the Ezulwinin Smart Partnership official dinner would be held where Dr Mahathir would deliver a keynote address on "Enhancing Identity & Progress through Smart Partnership themed " Co-Creating Our Destiny: The Smart Partnership Way."

Meanwhile, Dr Siti Hasmah would also be actively involved in social issue discussions.

On Thursday, an endowment fund would be launched to raise some US\$11 million (RM41.8 million) to fund activities of the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology and Management (CPTM) which has been involved in the organisation of the Langkawi International Dialogue and Southern African International Dialogue since 1995.

Swaziland is 17,360 sq km and has a population of 1.2 million.

Before coming here, Dr Mahathir was in Algeria for a three-day official visit.

He leaves Swaziland on Saturday, Aug 16, for an official visit to Syria. -- BERNAMA

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