

01 NOV 2003

Mahathir-Vacation

DR MAHATHIR LEAVES FOR TWO-WEEK VACATION ABROAD

SUBANG, Nov 1 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, today left for a vacation abroad after stepping down as the prime minister yesterday.

The couple boarded a Petronas executive jet bound for Spain which took off from the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) base here at 9.20am.

Dr Mahathir would spend about two weeks abroad, said one of his former aides.

Apart from his family members and former aides, those present at the airport to bid Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah farewell were Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk M.Kayveas.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir was conferred the Seri Maharaja Mangku Negara (S.M.N), the nation's highest award which carries the title Tun.

Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, was conferred the Seri Setia Mahkota Malaysia (S.S.M), which also carries the title Tun.

The awards were bestowed by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail at the Balairong Seri, Istana Negara, here, after Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took his oath of office as Malaysia's fifth prime minister.

-- BERNAMA

AT AZZ ZUL