

13 JUL 2003

Mahathir-Arrival

DR M ARRIVES IN KIEV FOR FOUR-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO UKRAINE

By: Mohd Kamel Othman

KIEV (Ukraine), July 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here Sunday for a four-day official visit to Ukraine, the first by a Malaysian Prime Minister since diplomatic relations were established with the former Soviet republic in March 1991.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, flew into the Ukrainian capital by a special aircraft from London and touched down at the Boryspil International Airport at 1.40pm local time.

He was met on arrival by Ukraine Chief of the Presidential Administration V. Medvedchuk, Foreign Minister A.Zlenko, Charge d'affaires of Ukraine in Malaysia Valentyn Velychko and Mayor of Kiev O.Omelchenko.

Also at the airport were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohammad.

Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah were then driven to the Government Guest House where they were received by other Malaysians.

Dr Mahathir will be accorded an official welcome at Mariinskyi Palace on Monday morning before meeting President Leonid Kuchma, Prime Minister Victor Yanukovic and Speaker of Parliament Volodymir Lytvyn.

Ukraine, situated in the south-eastern part of Central Europe, is the biggest eastern European country after Russia, covering over 600,000 square kilometres. Richly endowed with natural resources, it is one of the world's main centres of sugar production, producing both for its own needs and export.

It borders the Black Sea, Belarus, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia and Slovakia.

Dr Mahathir's first programme Sunday is a visit to the special-purpose wares exhibition.

After the official welcoming ceremony on Monday, the prime minister will co-chair a delegation meeting with Yanukovic before departing for a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of Unknown Soldiers and later visiting the Antonov aircraft plant.

On Tuesday, Dr Mahathir will leave for Odessa, the country's chief trade and fishing port, which is located in the south-central region.

In Odessa, the prime minister will witness joint venture signing ceremonies between JM Ventures Sdn Bhd and Odessa Port Transshipment Complex LLC, technical collaboration between Yasmin Marine Technology Sdn Bhd and Ukraine state companies and between AMP Corporation (M) Sdn Bhd and Iskra-State Electro Machine Building Plant.

Dr Mahathir will also attend a briefing on the set-up of the Malaysia Trade Centre and tour the Odessa Port and palm oil storage facilities before leaving for Simferopol, which is south of Odessa and the administrative, economic and cultural centre located on the banks of Salgir River.

On Wednesday, the prime minister will test-ride the Superfoils and other naval crafts before having lunch with Malaysians studying at Crimean State Medical University. About 630 Malaysian students are enrolled in Ukrainian institutions, mostly pursuing medical degrees.

Before leaving for home in the evening, Dr Mahathir is scheduled to give a press conference for the Malaysian media.

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