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Mahathir-WEF

MAHATHIR ARRIVES IN SWITZERLAND FOR WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

By: Azman Ujang

DAVOS (Switzerland), Jan 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived in Zurich Thursday to attend the 33rd annual World Economic Forum (WEF) here which has taken on a sombre note this year under the cloud of possible war in Iraq.

Dr Mahathir later took a three-hour train ride to this Swiss resort and from the train station, walked for five minutes in snowy weather to the Arabella Sheraton Hotel, where he is staying during his three-day visit here.

The Prime Minister flew in from Cairo after a two-day visit to Egypt following another two-day visit to Lebanon.

Some 2,000 business and government leaders are meeting here this time on the theme, "Building Trust".

The theme is chosen because since the last meeting, confidence in the security of public and corporate life has been affected as worldwide, apparently robust institutions have been shattered by disaster and scandals.

Dr Mahathir, a regular Davos attendee, is expected to participate in four sessions over the three days. They are on "Trust and Governance for a New Era", "How the Fight Against Terrorism Will Change the World," "Political Islam and Its Discontent," and "Economic and Geopolitical Implication of the Fight Against International Terrorism".

Security for this meeting is particularly tight and even Malaysian journalists covering the prime minister are disallowed access to most of the sessions.

The meeting will focus on six issues -- business, development, economics, leadership, security and values.

It will also explore issues and trends across a variety of fields, ranging from science and technology to arts and humanities.

Besides attending and speaking at some of the sessions, the prime minister will also be meeting President A. Nazarbayev of Kaakhstan, Mongolian Prime Minister Nambar Enkhbayar and Ukrainian Prime Minister Victor F. Yanukovych, on the sidelin

Others gathered here are King Abdullah of Jordan, former United States president Bill Clinton, US Secretary of State Colin Powell and the US Attorney-General John Ashcroft who will chair the session on "How the Fight Against Terrorism Will Change the World", in which Dr Mahathir will be a panellist.

On the Malaysian side, the other participants are Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, Petronas president and chief executive officer Tan Sri Hassan Merican, Bank Simpanan Nasional chairman Datuk Azim Zabidi, Malaysian Trades Union Congress secretary-general G. Rajasekaran, New Straits Times Assistant Group Editor Hardev Kaur, Universiti Malaya economics lecturer Dr K. Jomo Sundram, Puteri Umno Chief Azalina Othman Said and cartoonist Reggie Lee.

-- BERNAMA

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