

23 FEB 2003

NAM-Mahathir (Bilaterals)

NAM LEADERS BEGIN CALLING ON DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be kept busy today with a series of talks with Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) leaders on the sidelines of the movement's 13th Summit.

He is scheduled to meet at least seven leaders apart from opening the NAM Business Forum in Petaling Jaya.

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe was the first to call on Dr Mahathir at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here, the venue of the six-day Summit which started on Thursday. Their talks lasted for about 30 minutes.

This was followed by talks with his Nepalese counterpart Lokendra Bahadur Chand, after which Dr Mahathir left the PWTC for the Sunway Lagoon Resort Hotel to deliver a keynote address at the business forum.

Dr Mahathir will continue with bilateral meetings in the afternoon, including talks with Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and South African President Thabo Mbeki, the outgoing chairman of NAM.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri are also scheduled to call on Dr Mahathir in the afternoon.

Today is officially a rest day for the Summit but the PWTC continues to be a hive of activity.

A committee of 10 NAM member countries chaired by South Africa is meeting today to work out a statement on Palestine.

This statement is among four documents to be presented to leaders of the 114-member NAM for endorsement when they meet for two days from tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

JS MAM YBY