

30 MAY 2003

Mahathir-Depart

PM LEAVES FOR G8 INFORMAL DIALOGUE IN FRANCE

KUALA LUMPUR, May 30 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight left for Geneva en route to Evian, France, to attend the G8 Summit Informal Dialogue, which will be held on June 1 and 2.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, left on a special government aircraft at the RMAF base in Subang, near here, at about 11.30pm.

Among those present to see them off were Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng and Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy.

Dr Mahathir, who is chairman of the 116-member Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), is among non-G8 leaders invited by French President Jacques Chirac to attend the dialogue.

All G8 leaders, including United States President George W. Bush, are expected to attend the talks to exchange views with the invited non-G8 leaders.

Among the non-G8 countries and international organisations invited for the dialogue are Malaysia, India, Brazil, Mexico, China, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), European Union, United Nations and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Evian, located near the French-Swiss border, is a lakeside town at the foot of the ski slopes of the French Alps known for its fresh drinking water.

It is near to two leading Swiss cities, Geneva and Lausanne. The prime minister will go to Evian via Geneva because the town does not have an international airport.

On arrival in Geneva on May 31, Dr Mahathir will head straight to Lausanne to join other non-G8 leaders who will be attending a dinner given by Swiss President Pascal Couchepin.

The following day, the prime minister will depart for Evian to attend the dialogue before returning to his hotel in Lausanne.

Dr Mahathir is also expected to attend an informal meeting on June 2 to be hosted by Chinese President Hu Jintao and then leave for Japan.

Dr Mahathir will be making a working visit to Japan from June 2 to 6 before returning home.

-- BERNAMA

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