

21 JUL 2004

Abdullah-Arrival

ABDULLAH ARRIVES IN FRANCE FOR WORKING VISIT

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

PARIS, July 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad

Badawi arrived here Tuesday night to begin a working visit to France aimed

at strengthening further bilateral ties between both countries.

On hand to meet him at the Le Bourget Airport, where the Paris Airshow

is held biennially, was International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk

Seri Rafidah Aziz and newly-appointed ambassador to France Datuk Hamidah

Mohamed Yusoff.

Abdullah, who was accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid

Albar, flew in from Washington after an official trip to the United States.

The highlight of his visit here will be a working luncheon with President Jacques Chirac on Thursday when both leaders are expected to

discuss bilateral matters including trade and investment as well as international issues.

This is Abdullah's first visit to France since taking over as Prime

Minister from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in October last year. His visit takes

on added significance given Malaysia's chairmanship of the Organisation of

the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

His schedule starts Wednesday with meetings with leaders of several top

French telecommunications and defence-related companies.

The Prime Minister is also expected to meet Economy, Finance and Industry Minister Nicolas Sarkozy Wednesday.

He will also hold closed-door discussions with the French Institute of

International Relations, a political and economic think-tank, and MEDEF,

the French Employers Federation.

Abdullah will also meet the Malaysian community residing in France.

The Prime Minister leaves Paris on Thursday afternoon for London to

begin another working visit to the United Kingdom.

-- BERNAMA

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