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Grand welcome for Dr Mahathir

ALOR STAR, Wed. - Kedah will stage a grand welcome ceremony for the return of its beloved son and former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Monday.

It will be Dr Mahathir's first visit to his home State since stepping down from his post on Oct 31.

More than 10,000 people are expected to wait for the arrival of Dr Mahathir and his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport in Kepala Batas at 3.45pm.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain said the ceremony was to express the people's gratitude to the former premier.

He said Dr Mahathir, who is Kubang Pasu MP, would later distribute donations to 300 orphans and widows from the Tunjang State constituency at Masjid Felda Laka Selatan in Changloon at 6pm.

Dr Mahathir would then join the public for a breaking of fast and terawih prayers before returning to his home in Titi Gajah here.

Meanwhile, Syed Razak said the State Government had agreed to take over the premises of seven former private Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) and turn them into State-run Maktab Mahamud.

The schools are located in Pendang, Sik, Kuala Muda, Merbok, Kulim, Pokok Sena and Baling. The State has already taken over two former SAR in Bandar Baharu and Padang Terap.