

World religious leaders at Khazakhstan summit

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ASTANA (Khazakhstan): Five years ago the world was shocked by the Sept 11 carnage. Ironically yesterday, about 60 religious leaders, honorary speakers and 500 journalists from all over the world gathered here for the Second Congress of Leaders of World Religions.

The preliminary to the two-day landmark event to be held today and tomorrow at the Palace of Peace and Accord was held at the Presidential Building yesterday.

The summit caps three years of preparation by representatives of major religions. The agenda includes discussions on numerous challenges facing the international community especially on

religious state and terrorism.

The main topics selected for debate are "religious freedom" and "role of religions in enhancing international security". At the end of the congress, participants will contribute to a final Declaration on Religion, Society and International Security.

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is among the speakers at the congress. Other speakers include general secretary of the Saudi-based Muslim World League, Dr Abdullah Abdulmohsin Al-Turki Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, His All Holiness Bartholomew; Cardinal Roger Etchegaray (Emeritus President of Pontifical Council of Peace and Justice); Rabbi Shloma Amar, Shepardic Chief Rabbi of Israel; and several others representing Buddhism, Judaism, Shinto Taoism and Hinduism.