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## Packed schedule awaits Dr M as he returns to UNGA

by SHAZNI ONG

PRIME Minister (PM) Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is poised to make a return to the world stage once again, leading a team of delegates for a working visit to the 73rd United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York beginning yesterday.

Among the highlights during the visit would be Dr Mahathir's presentation of Malaysia's statement at the General Debate last Friday.

The theme for this year's debate is "Making the UN Relevant to All People: Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Peaceful, Equitable and Sustainable Societies".

The debate is expected to focus on the continuing relevance of the UN system with the emphasis on the collective commitments made by world leaders to address the challenges of peace, equity and sustainability.

The Foreign Affairs Ministry in a statement yesterday said Dr Mahathir's address will also showcase the new Malaysia as a mature democracy that upholds the primacy of the rule of law.

"The PM will outline Malaysia's commitments in working with other UN member states in achieving the objectives under the theme of the 73rd General Debate and beyond.

"He will also underscore Malaysia's expectations of the UN as the principal interna-

tional organisation mandated to maintain international peace and security," the statement read.

The assembly will also be Dr Mahathir's first appearance as the seventh PM, representing a new government with fresh mandates and aspirations, in over 15 years since his last address at the 58th session in 2003.

Dr Mahathir is accompanied by his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah, Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu, Health Minister Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir and senior government officials.

Meanwhile, *Bernama* reported that Dr Mahathir is scheduled to meet British PM Theresa May on the sidelines of the UNGA tomorrow.

The two PMs are to share on matters such as the global economy and the latest information on Brexit and Malaysia's economic progress.

In their first meeting since Dr Mahathir became PM for the second time following Pakatan Harapan's May 9 general election victory, both leaders are also expected to hold discussions on ties between the two countries.

Prior to that, Dr Mahathir was to meet Iranian President Hassan Rouhani yesterday, soon after arriving in New York where the discussion will focus on the situation in West Asia.

Dr Mahathir is also sche-

duled to meet Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim Hamad Al Thani and Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena.

On Thursday, Dr Mahathir is expected to deliver his keynote address at the "Achieving SDGs: Unleashing the Potential of Islamic Finance" event at the UN.

The event is jointly organised by the Securities Commission Malaysia, the UN Development Programme and the Islamic Development Bank.

Other events which he is slated to attend includes a dialogue with the US Council on Foreign Relations, a panel discussion in the Bloomberg Global Business Forum, as well as an address at the Asia Society.

Dr Mahathir is also scheduled to have bilateral meetings with his counterparts on the sidelines of the assembly, to discuss matters of mutual interest.

The ministry said the meetings are expected to strengthen Malaysia's bilateral relations with other countries and enhance understanding among world leaders on pertinent regional and global issues.

During the visit, Dr Mahathir is expected to meet with renowned entrepreneurs, as well as potential investors from the US and will host a dinner for the Malaysian diaspora in New York.

He is scheduled to be interviewed by the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal* and *TRT World* too.

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