

Dr Mahathir to receive two major honours in Qatar

N&T- 11/12/2019 pg. 4

DOHA: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be bestowed with two major honours during his official visit to Qatar, which begins today.

Dr Mahathir, who will make his first trip to Qatar since taking the helm last year, will receive the awards at the Doha Forum, as well as the Qatar University.

Mohamad Shahr Sabarudin, the charge d'affaires of the Malaysian embassy in Qatar, said the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Hamad Al-Thani, will present an award to Dr Mahathir at the Doha Forum Awards on Saturday.

This will be the first award bestowed on any leader or individual since the Doha Forum was first organised last year.

"The award is a gesture of appreciation to the prime minister in the aspect of leadership, as

well as to his success in developing Malaysia and its role on the global stage.

"Dr Mahathir's presence will be eagerly awaited by the people of Qatar.

"The prime minister will also receive another award, this time from the Qatar University, which is the country's premier education institution.

"Dr Mahathir will be conferred with an honorary doctorate in philosophy," Shahr told the Malaysian media here yesterday.

As part of his four-day official visit, Dr Mahathir will meet Sheikh Tamim at the latter's palace tomorrow.

He also has a packed schedule with meetings scheduled with Qatar's captains of industry.

Dr Mahathir will meet the chairman of the Qatar Foundation, Sheikha Moza Nasser Al

Missned, who is also the consort of Sheikh Hamad Khalifa Al Thani, the former emir of Qatar.

The Qatar Foundation provides scholarships for Malaysian students pursuing their education in the country.

Shahr said Qatar is Malaysia's fifth-largest trading partner in West Asia.

The Malaysia-Qatar trade was valued at RM3.72 billion last year, an increase from the RM3.19 billion in 2017.

Major Malaysian exports to Qatar include electrical and electronic goods, manufactured metals, wood products and processed foods.

Malaysia imports primarily crude oil, chemicals and chemical products, as well as metals.

Qatar has, over the years, been focusing on the construction and public infrastructure sectors, especially as part of its prepara-

tions to host the Fifa World Cup 2022, which has seen the construction of eight new stadiums, as well as the upgrading of current stadiums.

"Qatar has a population of three million. Of that total, only 300,000 are Qataris.

"The rest are foreigners," said Shahr.

Malaysia first established diplomatic relations with Qatar in 1974.

The bilateral relationship was further enhanced with the opening of the Malaysian embassy in Doha in August 2004, followed by the opening of the Qatar embassy here in September the same year.

Shahr said there are 5,000 Malaysians residing in Qatar, the majority of whom are employed with Qatar Airways, as well as in the education and petroleum sectors.