

Dr Mahathir arrives in Hangzhou to begin five-day China visit

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HANGZHOU, Aug 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived here today to begin his five-day official visit to China, aimed at further strengthening the 44-year ties between Kuala Lumpur and Beijing.

Hangzhou is the first leg of the visit that will also take him to China's capital, Beijing.

The aircraft carrying the Malaysian leader landed at Hangzhou Xiaoshan International Airport at 9.05 pm (same time in Malaysia).

Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah and Malaysian ambassador to China Datuk Zainuddin Yahya were on hand to welcome Dr Mahathir who is accompanied by his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

Dr Mahathir is making an official visit to China once again as prime minister after a 17-year gap, having made his last official trip to this country in October 2001.

During his first tenure as prime minister, from 1981 to 2003, Dr Mahathir visited China seven times, and nine more times after he retired.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to visit on Saturday the Alibaba Group headquarters in this city, the hometown of its co-founder and executive chairman Jack Ma.

Also in his itinerary in Hangzhou is a visit to the headquarters of Zhejiang Geely Holding Group which owns a 49.9 per cent stake in Proton, before departing for Beijing.

In the Chinese capital on Sunday, the prime minister is scheduled to visit Da Jiang Innovations, one of the world's largest manufacturers of drones, attend a dialogue with the Malaysian and Chinese business community, and meet with members of the Malaysian diaspora.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to hold talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping as well as Premier Li Keqiang on Monday.

On the final day of the visit Tuesday, Dr Mahathir will head to the National Agricultural Science and Technology Innovation Park.

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